TULSIDAS

तुलसीदास

THE EPIC OF RAM

VOLUME 1

Translated by Philip Lutgendorf



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The Epic of Ram presents a new translation of the *Rāmcaritmānas* of Tulsidas (1543–1623). Written in Avadhi, a literary dialect of classical Hindi, the poem has become the most beloved retelling of the ancient Ramayana story across northern India. A devotional work revered and recited by millions of Hindus today, it is also a magisterial compendium of philosophy and lore and a literary masterpiece. This volume presents Tulsidas's grand introduction to the Ram story, replete with philosophical and theological meditations and tales of gods, sages, and royalty. Here, the stage is set for the advent and divine mission of Ram.

This new translation into free verse conveys the passion and momentum of the inspired poet and storyteller. It is accompanied by the most widely accepted edition of the Avadhi text, presented in the Devanagari script.

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INTRODUCTION

The Rāmcaritmānas *and Its Sources*

The *Rāmcaritmānas* (frequently translated in English as "Divine lake of Ram's deeds") by Tulsidas is among the most beloved and revered works of Indian literature. An epic poem composed in Hindi in the late sixteenth century, the *Mānas* rapidly acquired the renown and sanctity usually reserved for compositions in Sanskrit, the ancient and elite "language of the gods." Over the next three centuries its fame grew steadily, spread by oral expounders, itinerant singers, and the scholarly exegetes who were sometimes patronized by the landholding elites and princely rulers of the Indo-Gangetic Plain. In the colonial era, British scholars and administrators came to regard it as "the Bible of Northern India" and "the best and most trustworthy guide to the popular living faith of its people."[1] In the twentieth century it assumed an important place in the emerging Hindi literary canon, inspired major works by modernist poets, and was regularly quoted, during India's freedom struggle, by Mohandas Gandhi, who called it "the greatest book of all devotional literature."[2] Later its impact was enhanced by the release of millions of inexpensive printed copies, by performances available on records, audiocassettes, and compact discs, and by a television serialization that held much of India spellbound in 1987–1989. A comprehensive early twenty-first-century study of the development of Hindi literature assesses the *Mānas* as "a defining work of Indian culture"

and concludes that it "remains the leading vernacular scripture of north India today."[3]

A retelling of the ancient and popular tale of Ram and Sita, which first appeared in literary form in Valmiki's Sanskrit epic *Rāmāyaṇa* (last centuries B.C.E.), the *Mānas* belongs to a long tradition of works that recast the narrative in distinctive ways. Despite the prestige accorded the Sanskrit archetype, subsequent retellings never favored literal translation. Instead, poets and storytellers working in Sanskrit, various Prakrits, and later regional literary vernaculars of south and north India exercised great freedom in crafting original versions that, while preserving the basic characters and outline of the narrative, introduced significant innovations. The result was a multiform oral and literary tradition that, although sometimes encompassed by the generic label "Ramayana," may better be termed *Rāmakathā,* or "Rama storytelling." Tulsidas's own version emerges from an influential current in this vast river of story, imbued with the ideology of "sharing" in or devotion to—*bhakti* is the Indic term—a personal god or goddess and the emotional, public worship of that deity. Significant precursor works include the massive *Irāmāvatāram* (The descent of Rama), by the twelfth-century Tamil poet Kampan, and subsequent epic reworkings in Telugu, Marathi, and Bangla. In 1442 the poet Vishnudas of Gwalior composed, in a precursor dialect to modern Hindi, a *Rāmāyaṇkathā* of nearly seven thousand lines. It included a lengthy prologue and was set primarily in "stanzas" of two alternating meters, *caupāī* and *dohā*—which would become the structural norm for narrative poems in premodern Hindi, including the *Mānas.*[4]

In his own prologue, Tulsidas pays homage to Valmiki and to the many vernacular poets who preceded him (1.14.1–4), and says that he writes "in accordance with many *purāṇas*, scriptures, and sacred treatises, and with what is recounted in the Ramayana and in other places, too" (1.0.7).[5] The published writings of traditional *Mānas* scholars and commentators abound in citations of parallel or congruent passages found especially in Sanskrit works, which suggest Tulsidas's vast learning and synthesizing skills. Modern academic scholars, concerned with delineating the stages of composition of his poem, have also tried to identify the major sources from which he drew and to situate his act of composition in its historical context.[6] They have argued that although the Valmiki epic was certainly familiar to Tulsidas, a more important Sanskrit source was the circa-fifteenth-century *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa* (Esoteric Ramayana), in which the story is narrated (as it is for much of the *Mānas*) by the god Shiva to his consort Parvati, and its hero is identified with the transcendent *brahma,* or absolute, of the influential Advaita, or nondualist school of philosophy. Specific episodes of Tulsidas's poem show the influence of a wide range of other Sanskrit source texts, including *purāṇas,* dramas, and spiritual handbooks. One scholar has ascribed particular influence to the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (c. tenth century), arguing that the *Mānas*'s great achievement was to do for Ram what the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* had done for Krishna: promote a universally accessible devotion to him as a personal and supreme God.[7]

Another important current of literature, although having little to do with the Ram story, may have inspired Tulsidas's

labor. It consists of poetic narratives composed by Sufi authors in an Eastern Hindi dialect very close to that of the *Mānas* that are generically known as "love stories" (*prem-kahānī, premākhyān*). These epic romances, four of which survive, all predating the *Mānas,* draw on the allegorical conventions of the Persian *maṣnavī* (an epic narrative in rhyming couplets), in which a lover's quest for an inaccessible beloved is likened to the Sufi path to mystical union with Allah. However, the pattern is recreated through narratives drawn from Hindu lore and using an almost entirely Sanskritic vocabulary, as well as the *caupāī-dohā* stanzaic form that would also be used by Tulsidas. Although these poems, by Muslim authors and typically transmitted in Persian script, were accorded at best an uneasy place in the Hindi literary canon devised by Indian (and mostly upper-caste Hindu) scholars in the twentieth century, they have recently received more nuanced and appreciative study as pioneering works of north Indian vernacular literature and as examples of "dialogic exchange" between coexisting and sometimes competing religious ideologies. Abounding in allusions to epic and puranic stories, and drawing on Indian erotic and aesthetic ideas as well as the mystical and ascetic practices of the Nath yoga sect, several of these works achieved significant popularity and public performance during the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries.[8]

Apart from their shared metrical form, literary dialect, and narratives of romance and spiritual quest, each of the Sufi works opens with a lengthy prologue in which the author praises his faith and his own preceptors and frames his ensuing narration. In addition, three of the four epics use the

setting of a sacred and magical lake called Manas (Mānasarovara, Mānasarodaka), equated by the Nath yogis with a "pool of nectar" in the subtle body, but also understood by the Sufi poets as a reservoir containing the "essence of eroticism." In the *Mirigāvatī* of Qutban (1503), for example, this deep lake, bounded by four symmetrical ghats made of precious stones, covered with blooming lotuses, and surrounded by a paradise-like garden, is the site of the hero's first glimpse of the enchanting "deer woman" who becomes the object of his quest. Tulsidas's own elaborate account of Lake Manas (1.36–43), from which he derived the title of his epic, resembles that of the Sufi poets in numerous details and forms the last section of an extensive prologue that may have been among the final elements added to the poem. Yet in his description of the lake, as indeed throughout his *Mānas* epic, Tulsidas's scorn for "slugs, frogs, and pond scum / the savors of myriad racy tales" (1.38.2), as well as his steadfast avoidance of the erotic description of feminine charms, suggest what the Hindu poet may have both consciously drawn and pointedly discarded from the older Sufi narratives. The evident literary and religious ambitions of the last of the surviving Sufi epics, Jayasi's 6,000-verse *Padmāvat* (1540), belie its author's protestations of modesty in the prologue, and also seem to prefigure the stance of Tulsidas, less than four decades later, in audaciously crafting a "true scripture" spoken by Shiva himself.[9]

The Life and Works of Tulsidas

A poet of extraordinary versatility and vision, Tulsidas is

celebrated as the author of a dozen works, most of which are dedicated to Ram, and which collectively advance a theology in which he is adored as the supreme, transcendent God to whom other revered Hindu deities are ultimately subordinate. Through his writings and his legendary biography, Tulsidas has come to exert a profound, perhaps unsurpassed influence on the ideology and practice of popular Hinduism throughout much of northern and central India and beyond, including several communities of the Indian diaspora. Not surprisingly, a figure of such stature is also, in certain contexts, controversial; his works have been subject to vastly differing interpretations, and there are few details of his biography that have not been contested.

His name means "servant/slave of tulsi," referring to the "holy basil" plant and its goddess, both of whom are considered to be especially pleasing to Vishnu (the goddess herself was wedded to him). It is thus a sectarian name and signals the poet's likely initiation into a Vaishnava religious order or guru-lineage, *-dās* being a common suffix for initiatory names in several orders. The poet himself often shortens this name in his poetic "signature" (*chāp,* or *bhaṇitā*) to "Tulsi." Yet although he has been proudly claimed by a number of branches of one ascetic order (the Ramanandis), Tulsi's formal affiliation has never been proven to the satisfaction of nonsectarian scholars. He does not seem to have established a sect, yet he came to be revered in his own lifetime as a *gosāīṃ,* or "master," and this may signal a role as *mahant,* or resident guru, of a small temple or monastery. Today "Goswami" (in its standard Anglicized spelling) is typically prefixed to his name and

indicates his status as a preceptor and exemplar to millions of Hindus.

Although historical evidence is sparse, considerably more is known about Tulsi than about the other most popular saint-poets of premodern Hindi (Kabir, Mirabai, and Surdas). He was literate, and a few manuscripts survive that may be in his own hand. Some of his works seem to contain autobiographical details, and three include dates of composition, indicating that he was active in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, during the reigns of the Mughal emperors Akbar and Jahangir. There is evidence that he spent a good part of his life in Banaras, regularly participated in public performance of devotional texts, including his own, and was supported in part by the offerings of appreciative listeners.

Beyond this, there is little in Tulsi's biography that is uncontested, beginning with his date of birth. Scholars have postulated 1526, 1532, or 1543 C.E., but popular accounts favor 1497, making the poet an improbable 126 years old at the time of his death, which is believed to have occurred in 1623. His birthplace is similarly uncertain, though the villages of Rajapur and Soron (both in present-day Uttar Pradesh) each claim this honor—along with at least five other places.[10] Several introspective passages in the poetic anthologies *Vinaypatrikā* and *Kavitāvalī*, both believed to have been finalized in the poet's old age, speak of a childhood of abandonment, want, and humiliation, for example: "Father and mother brought me into the world and abandoned me.... I was low, a vessel for disrespect, a coward who was glad to get even the scraps thrown out for dogs";

"I ate the leavings of all castes"; "I was born in a family of beggars" (*Kavitāvalī* 7.57, 72, 73). From this wretched early life, Tulsi speaks of being "rescued" by the mercy of Ram and Hanuman—statements usually interpreted to mean that the starving child was adopted by Vaishnava sadhus, or holy men (see, e.g., *Hanumānbāhuk* 21, *Vinaypatrikā* 33). One who was possibly in the lineage of the shadowy but influential teacher Ramananda (fifteenth century?) would become his guru; it was from him, Tulsi says, that he first heard the story of Ram (*Rāmcaritmānas* 1.30a).

That Tulsi later received formal education in the Sanskrit tradition, and hence was probably Brahman by birth, is evident from his writings. *Rāmājñāpraśna* (Inquiry into Ram's command), his first self-dated composition (1564 C.E., though several short works may have been composed earlier), is a condensed retelling of the Ram story intended for use in divination. His subsequent epic-length retelling of that tale, the *Rāmcaritmānas,* states that it was begun in March 1574 in Ayodhya, the pilgrimage city most associated with Ram's life (1.34.2–3), although a eulogy of Kashi (Varanasi/Banaras) at the commencement of its fourth sub-book, *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍ,* is generally interpreted to signal the poet's move to that city (4.0a). Several of his later works, lavish in their praise of the river Ganga and Shiva's city, indicate his continuing residence in Banaras and his growing recognition as a poet, singer, and, eventually, *gosāīṃ* (*Kavitāvalī* 7.64; *Hanumānbāhuk* 40–41), whom "the world now even likens to the great sage Valmiki" (*Kavitāvalī* 7.72). Indeed, a contemporary poet, Nabhadas, praises Tulsi as a reincarnation of Valmiki, born to save the

people of the dismal Kali Yuga through a retelling of the deeds of Ram.[11]

The final section of *Kavitāvalī,* which seems to date from Tulsi's old age, alludes to ominous astrological conjunctions and outbreaks of plague known to have occurred in Banaras during the first two decades of the seventeenth century (*Kavitāvalī* 7.170, 176–177). There are also references to "oppression" from Shiva's servants there (*Vinaypatrikā* 8, *Kavitāvalī* 7.165), possibly indicating criticism or persecution for his popularization of Ram devotion and his use of the vernacular instead of Sanskrit. During the last years of his life, the poet evidently suffered severe pain in one of his arms that sometimes spread through his body, and from an outbreak of boils; pleading for relief of these from Hanuman is the theme of more than half of the forty-four brilliant songs in the undated *Hanumānbāhuk* (20–44), which may have been his last substantial composition.

A bare list of facts does nothing to evoke the human personality—at once sincerely self-deprecating yet paradoxically self-confident and audaciously assertive of spiritual vision and verbal genius—that emerges from Tulsi's poetry. Popular tradition was not long in providing that personality with a detailed and inspiring biography, many incidents of which seem intended to expand on or explain allusions in his poetry. Nabhadas's tribute was greatly enlarged roughly a century later (1712) by the commentator Priyadas, with eleven four-line stanzas that comprise seven stories about Tulsi, all but one of which concern miracles performed or experienced as a result of his devotion to Ram.[12] These tales formed the basis for later retellings of the poet's life, such as

that by the Marathi poet Mahipati (1762), and for the lengthy verse biography known as *Tulsīcarit* (The deeds of Tulsi) that was published in 1889. This was followed, in the early twentieth century, by several "rediscovered" works that claim to be eyewitness biographies by contemporaries of the poet. Although these works remain, for good reason, suspect by scholars, one of them, *Mūlgosāīṃcarit* (Concise account of the master's deeds), achieved wide popular acceptance, especially after its publication by the Gita Press of Gorakhpur in 1934. It has shaped virtually all modern biographies of the saint-poet, from elite literature such as Suryakant Tripathi "Nirala"'s long poem *Tulsīdās* (1938), and Amritlal Nagar's 370-page historical novel, *Mānas kā haṃs* (Sacred bird of the Manas lake, 1972), to the popular *Tulsidas* comic book in the Amar Chitra Katha series (1974) and several Hindi films.[13]

Tulsidas is credited with a substantial corpus of writings, but because of the widespread practice, in the bhakti tradition, of adopting the "poetic signature" of a revered saint-poet when expressing compatible religious sentiments, scholars have long been concerned with identifying, among some thirty works attributed to him, his authentic compositions. This undertaking was pioneered by celebrated eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Indian exegetes, who established a list of twelve canonical compositions—six "minor" and six "major" works—that has remained generally accepted.[14] The minor works are both shorter and less popular, and include several that show a "looseness" of style that has led some scholars to declare them either inauthentic or immature efforts. The major works include several acclaimed and popular masterpieces, such as the *Gītāvalī* (Song cycle),

a retelling of the Ram story in 328 lyrical stanzas, and the two large collections, *Kavitāvalī* and *Vinaypatrikā*. The former (Anthology of songs in *kavitta* meter) is loosely organized into seven sub-books, echoing the traditional structure of a Ramayana. Within each section, however, only a few epic incidents are recounted, although these (such as Hanuman's burning of Lanka in the *Sundarkāṇḍ*) are retold with notable brilliance and in greater detail than in Tulsi's own epic (*Kavitāvalī* 5.3–25). The latter (whose title means "Letter of petition") is an anthology of 279 lyric poems that present a grand vision of a journey through the celestial court of Ram to deliver, with the intercession of Hanuman and Sita, a humble personal petition. Though perhaps mirroring the protocol of the imperial Mughal *darbār* and reflecting the influence of Surdas's "petitional" lyrics, this remarkable collection encompasses many beautiful and touching songs that have become widely performed as devotional hymns, or *bhajans*.

Structure and Themes

Tulsi's most celebrated work, which bears a date of composition corresponding to 1574, comprises roughly 12,800 lines, divided into 1,073 "stanzas" that are set within seven sub-books, which early manuscripts simply denote as numbered "stairs" or "stairways" (*sopān*)—"first stair," "second stair," and so on—descending into the allegorical lake to which the title alludes. Later tradition has given them additional names as *kāṇḍs,* or "sub-books," that reflect the architecture of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa,* with the

exception of Sub-book 6, which the Sanskrit epic titles *Yuddhakāṇḍa* (The book of war), and *Mānas* editions call *Laṅkākāṇḍ,* for the island city of Ram's enemies. But apart from the basic storyline, there is only an occasional direct resemblance to Valmiki's poem. Tulsi, drawing creatively on his many sources, retells the story of Ram, as he says, "for his own inner joy" (1.0.7). "First Stair," or *Bālkāṇḍ* (Book of youth), which in the Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa* is the second-shortest book and commences the story of Ram after only a brief introduction, is Tulsi's longest sub-book, more than half of which is devoted to an expansive prologue that introduces a set of four interlocking dialogues that frame the epic tale. The conversations between the gods Shiva and Parvati, the Vedic sages Yajnavalkya and Bharadvaj, and the immortal crow Bhushundi and the divine eagle Garuda, and finally the discourse of Tulsidas to his presumed audience, interwoven throughout much of the text, are announced in the allegory of the Manas lake (1.36–1.43) as its framing banks, or ghats. To traditional commentators, they suggest four distinct "points of view" from which the epic tale may be interpreted, even as they invoke a lineage of transmission that encourages future interpretive performances.[15]

As I have already noted, the basic structure of the *Mānas* reflects a long tradition of vernacular verse narratives and mainly consists of alternating sequences of meters known as *caupāī* and *dohā.* The former, which literally means "four feet," consists (in theory) of two lines, each made up of two rhyming halves of sixteen "beats" based on the relative duration of long and short syllables. Each line in this meter (called an *ardhālī,* or "half") thus has thirty-two beats, and

each pair of lines—a full "four-footed" *caupāī*—sixty-four. In practice, however, *ardhālīs* are not always paired, for some *Mānas* stanzas contain an uneven number of them. Modern print editions commonly assign sequential numbers to full *caupāīs*, adding an additional number as necessary if a given stanza contains an extra *ardhālī*, a practice I follow here.

Caupāīs are the principal verse form for advancing the narrative, and they frequently occur in sets of four (which is to say, eight lines of text, or, in this text and translation, sixteen lines), though longer sequences are not uncommon.[16] Each such set is concluded by a couplet in *dohā* meter, or occasionally in the very similar *soraṭhā*, the whole, *caupāīs* and *dohā*, constituting what I term a "stanza" of the text.[17] In north Indian oral tradition, stand-alone *dohās* are the most popular medium for aphoristic expression, and large numbers of them—including many drawn from the *Mānas*—are in circulation. But in a long narrative poem, the insertion of a *dohā* often signals a reflective pause in the rhythmic forward march of the *caupāīs*, as if the poet were stepping back momentarily to comment on or summarize the set of verses that preceded it. Tulsi often uses *dohās* to deliver asides or homilies in the voice of one of his narrators, or with his own poetic signature (signifying "Oh Tulsi," or "Tulsidas says").

Dohā couplets are numbered, and it is conventional among *Mānas* scholars to treat them as concluding a stanza, even though most of the sub-books also open with one or more *dohās/soraṭhās*—here, such an opening couplet is assigned a zero. Sometimes a stanza ends with a series of *dohās*, which then bear a single number followed by a letter of the

alphabet, in alphabetical order (Devanagari in the original, Roman in the translation). Thus "1.14d" refers to the fourth couplet in the series (an unusually long one, comprising seven *dohās* and *soraṭhās*) that concludes stanza fourteen of *Bālkāṇḍ*.

The two alternating meters of *caupāī* and *dohā* account for more than 90 percent of the *Mānas* text. The remainder, apart from invocatory Sanskrit verses that commence each sub-book, consists of other meters, the most common of which is the four-line *harigītikā chand* (usually abbreviated as simply *chand*), which is periodically interjected, usually between a set of *caupāīs* and their concluding *dohā*.[18] Stylistically, these lyric quatrains seem to signal an even more extended break in narrative flow and they typically occur at moments of heightened emotion, with the opening line of a *chand* generally repeating, with variation, the second half of the preceding *caupāī*. In their arrest of action to allow contemplation of a (generally) auspicious scene, *chand* passages often present a devotional tableau, prolonging a moment of *darśan,* or visual communion with divine characters, and they may serve precisely this purpose in dramatic stagings of the epic, as in the *Rāmlīlā* folk pageants. They are also the most popular *Mānas* verses for musical performance.

The religious, philosophical, and ideological perspective of the *Mānas* author is as complex as his narrative structure and has generated much scholarly analysis. Although I hope that readers of a straightforward new translation may assess the author's point of view for themselves, I will identify some of the principal themes that resonate through

his first book.[19] Ram's supreme divinity is foregrounded throughout, and although he is often equated with Vishnu and identified by common Vaishnava epithets such as Hari and Prabhu (most often, "the Lord," in my translation), a number of passages make clear that Tulsi reveres Ram, or the dyad of Sita-Ram, as the ultimate form of godhead, of whom all other exalted deities, including Vishnu and Lakshmi and Shiva and Parvati, are but partial and contingent manifestations. This supreme deity is splendidly and beguilingly immanent, and the poet never neglects an opportunity to offer an exquisitely detailed "toe to crown" (*nakh-śikh*) description of his form. *Bālkāṇḍ* alone contains six of these, and the iconographic features detailed (such as his bluish complexion, the *kaustubha* gem on his chest, and, sometimes, his four arms) are identical with those of Vishnu. Paradoxically, Tulsi reminds his audience that this ultimate Ram is also supremely transcendent. He is often described in negative terms (unborn, formless, desireless, nameless) and, especially in the Prologue, is equated with his name—voiced, heard, or written—which, Tulsi asserts in one notable couplet, is "greater even than [embodied] Ram" (1.23). His emphasis on the saving power of Ram's name and its repetition as a mantra suggests the spiritual practice advocated by poets of the *sant* tradition, like Kabir and Ravidas, in their devotion to a God "without attributes" (*nirguṇ*), a path often contrasted with that of poets like Surdas and Tulsi in their reverence for a charming and tangible deity "with attributes" (*saguṇ*). The reconciliation and synthesis of such seemingly opposed categories—the worship of a formless absolute versus that of a supreme deity endowed with form

and narrative, of austerely philosophical Advaita Vedanta with emotional Vaishnava bhakti, or indeed of Shaiva and Vaishnava sectarian ideologies—is one of the epic's overarching achievements, deftly accomplished through the medium of a beloved story set in an accessible language that is at once "rustic" (*grāmya*), polished, and extraordinarily resonant and musical.

Tulsi's attitudes toward social hierarchy and caste are, taking the epic as a whole, similarly paradoxical, but readers of *Bālkāṇḍ* will soon note his advocacy of reverence for Brahmans as "gods on earth" (*bhūsur*), as well as his characterization of women (including goddesses like Parvati) as inherently more flawed and prone to ignorance and delusion than men. Such attitudes, although common in premodern Indian poetry, have generated much controversy in recent times, resulting in both trenchant critiques of the poet's alleged "conservatism," "casteism," and "misogyny," as well as, conversely, fervent defenses of his purported "liberalism" and "universalism."[20] Again, it is my hope that readers of this translation will form their own opinions on such matters.

"First Stair" (Bālkāṇḍ, The Book of Youth)

Thematically speaking, the first sub-book of the *Mānas* is divided almost perfectly in half. Of its 361 stanzas, the first 175, presented in this volume, form a long introduction to what is generally thought of as the Ram story, the hero of which is finally born more than halfway through the *kāṇḍ*, in stanza 191. The introductory half may be further subdivided as follows:[21]

1. stanzas 1–43	the poet's prologue
2. stanzas 44–124	story of Sati's delusion and of Shiva's marriage to Parvati
3. stanzas 125–139	story of Narad's delusion and curse
4. stanzas 140–152	story of Manu and Satarupa's boon
5. stanzas 153–175	story of King Pratapbhanu

Although Tulsi's voice is regularly heard throughout (especially in "signature" couplets), the principal narrator of the second section is the sage Yajnavalkya, and the god Shiva (with occasional interjections from Yajnavalkya and Tulsi) narrates sections 3 to 5, comprising tales of curses and boons that set the stage for Ram's advent. The first 43 stanzas, however, belong to Tulsidas alone, and contain some of the most brilliant—and difficult—poetry in the epic. It is in this section that he invokes the blessings of all beings in creation (including "scoundrels," whom he archly praises) and acknowledges his predecessors and teachers (1.1–18), lauds the divine name "Ram" (1.19–27), tells how he learned and began to narrate the story (1.28–34), introduces his chosen title, *Rāmcaritmānas* (1.35), and presents his framing allegory of Lake Manas, its ghats and surroundings, and the "river of poetry" that flows from it to nurture the world (1.36–43). All this is indeed comparable to a modern author's preface and suggests a vision of the completed work, leading several scholars to conclude that it belongs to the final stage of composition and that its auspicious "inauguration" date (coinciding with the

festival of Ram's birth in 1574; 1.34.2–3) may in fact be close to a *terminus ad quem*.

Once the narration of the Ram story begins (in volume 2 of this translation), readers familiar with Valmiki's *Bālakāṇḍa* will notice striking differences in content and emphasis, of which I will cite only a few examples. Despite his title, the Sanskrit poet showed little interest in Ram's early youth, moving him and his brothers, in a mere fourteen couplets of a single chapter, from birth to marital age (*Rāmāyaṇa* 1.17.6–19). Tulsi, probably inspired by the Krishna legend, delights in an extended account of "childhood pastimes" (*bāl līlā*) that runs to more than 150 lines (1.191–205), including a divine vision surreptitiously granted to Ram's mother, Kausalya. On the other hand, he omits the many long stories that, in Valmiki's version, the sage Vishvamitra narrates to Ram and Lakshman when he first takes them to the forest. Thus, the saga of the "descent of Ganga"—which runs through ten chapters in the Sanskrit poem (1.34–43)—is dispensed with in a single *ardhālī* ("Gadhi's son recounted the whole tale / of how the gods' river had come to earth"; 1.212.1), and the fifteen-chapter biography of Vishvamitra himself (*Rāmāyaṇa* 1.50–64) is likewise merely alluded to, at the very end of the sub-book (1.359.3–4). Of course, in his terse references to such famous tales, Tulsi provided pretexts for later oral expounders and commentators to digress with their own retellings.

Conversely, some incidents treated only briefly by Valmiki receive notable expansion by Tulsi. Thus the tense encounter with the warrior-sage and previous Vishnu avatar Parashuram, accorded two brief chapters at the end of Valmiki's

opening book, after Ram's marriage to Sita (1.74–75), is repositioned by Tulsi to immediately follow Ram's breaking of Shiva's bow and is expanded to more than 160 lines that offer, in Lakshman's repeated taunts of the sage (entirely absent from Valmiki), some of the sauciest dialogue in the epic (1.268–285).

Once Parashuram is pacified and dispatched to the Himalayas, Tulsi plunges happily into the single longest segment of the sub-book—more than seventy stanzas devoted to Ram and Sita's wedding festivities. Given that these have been prefigured, in its first half, by a similarly elaborate account of the "courtship" and marriage of Shiva and Parvati (1.65–103), and that both sets of wedding stanzas are supplemented with numerous *chands* that expand their line count, more than a quarter of Tulsi's long *Bālkāṇḍ* is devoted to a spectacular catalogue of marriage customs, recounted in loving and hyperbolic detail—from the sending of invitations and the construction of a lavishly decorated pavilion to a multicourse postnuptial feast accompanied by ribald women's songs that taunt members of the groom's party. Like his characters, Tulsi seems beside himself with joy, and lyrical *chand* quatrains, normally inserted only rarely and singly into stanzas, now bloom in profuse clusters of as many as four, prolonging the vision and joy of the climactic moments of the rite. Inspired, perhaps, by the spectacle of aristocratic weddings of the poet's day, and peppered with regular reminders that what is occurring is in fact the union of the ultimate God with his feminine energy (*śakti*), the book's wedding passages also seem to epitomize India's ongoing love affair with lavish nuptials. One might even call

them, only partly in jest, a prototype of the "Bollywood" weddings of contemporary Hindi films—that of Shiva and Parvati, indeed, includes the last-minute melodrama of the bride's mother threatening suicide and tearfully announcing, "I will not allow this wedding!" (1.96.5). Like modern film scenes, these passages also lend themselves to reenactment in real-world settings; they have sometimes been recited as auspicious scriptures to accompany nuptial rites and have served as scripts for the communal enactment of *vivāh pañcamī,* the late-autumn festival commemorating Ram and Sita's marriage. The extended attention that Tulsi devotes to them, which significantly contributes to the length of his first sub-book, reveals his preoccupation with presenting visions of beauty and auspiciousness.

Acknowledgments

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I dedicate this translation to Meher Baba, who inspires me; to the many *Mānas* scholars and devotees who have instructed and encouraged me; and to the memory of three

dear mentors and friends—Ramji Pande, A. K. Ramanujan, and Chandradharprasad Narayan Singh ("Bhanuji").

NOTES

1 Macfie 1930; Growse 1978: xxxviii.

2 Gandhi 1968: 47.

3 McGregor 2003: 917–939. See also Orsini 1998.

4 See McGregor 1991; 2003: 917–919.

5 The relevance of the term "prologue" to the structure of the *Mānas* will be explained later. For a discussion of the numbering of *Mānas* verses, see "Structure and Themes."

6 See, e.g., Bulcke 1977, 1980; Gupta 1942; McGregor 1984: 110–112; Vaudeville 1955.

7 Vaudeville 1955: 313–314, 325–326. The presence of a dialogue, in the *Uttarkāṇḍ,* between an immortal crow named Bhushundi and the divine eagle Garuda has long supported speculation that Tulsidas drew on another Sanskrit text called *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa,* but attempts to identify this elusive source with a purported esoteric work of the Ramanandi tradition remain controversial (see Keislar 1998; McGregor 2003: 938; Singh 1975, 1980; Vaudeville 1955: xx–xxi).

8 McGregor observed that Maulana Daud's *Candāyan,* dated to 1379, is "the first clearly known, major work of Hindi literature" (1984: 26); the phrase "dialogic exchange" is taken from de Bruijn (2005a; 2005b). On the performance of the Sufi epics, see Behl 2012: 286–324.

9 On Jayasi's ambitions, see Behl 2012: 22, 44, and compare with *Mānas* 1.8–10.

10 See Allchin 1966: 31 and Gupta 1942: 138–140 for the arguments for various birthdates and birthplaces.

11 *Bhaktamāl, chappay* 129. See Nābhādās 1909: 756.

12 For the stories, see Growse 1978: xlii–xlvii, and Abbott and Godbole 1933: 31–56.

13 On the controversies that surround the various biographies, see Gupta 1964; Lutgendorf 1994a. Cinematic hagiographies include the 1954 *Tulsidas,* directed by Balchandra Harsukh Bhatt and a 1964 film with the same title directed by B. K. Adarsh.

14 For an annotated list of these works, see Grierson 1893.

15 On the "four ghat" structure, see Lutgendorf 1989; 1991: 18–29.

16 Because the great compression and elision of Tulsi's poetry cannot be duplicated in English, in my translation, each "foot" or half of an *ardhālī* is given a separate line, so that a two-line sequence in English substitutes for what (in Devanagari script editions) is a single, numbered line in *caupāī* meter, with a vertical line (*daṇḍa*) marking the caesura between its two rhyming halves, and a double *daṇḍa* at its end.

17 In terms of syllable count, both *dohās* and *soraṭhās* contain twenty-four beats per line, but in the former there is a caesura after the thirteenth beat and the rhyme occurs at the line's end. The *soraṭhā* reverses this structure, with the rhyme and the caesura occurring at the eleventh beat.

18 In the translation, *chand* quatrains appear as eight lines of English, and each *chand* is assigned a number consecutive to those of preceding *caupāīs*. Other meters will be discussed in succeeding volumes, in introducing the books in which they appear.

19 For more extended discussion of Tulsi's theology and ethics as revealed in the epic, see Babineau 1979; Gupta 1942: 361–433; Hill 1952: xxv–xxxvii; Lutgendorf 1991: 351–360; Macfie 1930; Whaling 1980.

20 For examples and discussion, see Hess 1999; Lorenzen 1995; Lutgendorf 1991: 392–407; Shastri 1949.

21 In the translation, to assist readers I have opted for fewer subdivisions, using five thematic section titles for the whole first sub-book.

NOTE ON THE TEXT AND TRANSLATION

Despite its prestige and popularity, the *Rāmcaritmānas* has not been accorded a truly critical edition, which might yet be assembled from careful comparative study of (reportedly) surviving manuscripts dating to the first hundred years after its composition. Copies of some of these were in the possession of celebrated *Mānas* expounders of the nineteenth century and became the basis for published versions, edited by them and issued by the new vernacular presses of the period. Differences among these editions were (by the standards of premodern Hindi literature) comparatively minor but of course much debated, and in the twentieth century three more authoritative and scholarly editions attempted to resolve them—though none could claim to have adhered to the standards followed, for example, in the long-term projects to reconstruct the early texts of the Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*.[1] The first of these, issued by the industrious Gita Press of Gorakhpur and accompanied by a readable gloss in Hindi (GP), has become, by default, the standard edition of the epic, and has been used by every translator since Growse, including me. However, I also constantly consult the most elaborate and celebrated of published commentaries, *Mānaspīyūṣ* (Nectar of the *Mānas*; MP), which incorporates the insights of many traditional scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It, too, uses the GP edition as basic text, but it periodically offers

variant readings from manuscripts and older published editions. When such variations seem significant, I explain this in an endnote, as I do in the (very rare) instances in which I adopt a variant reading in preference to that found in the Gita Press version.

Readers may note occasional discrepancies between the Avadhi of Tulsidas's Devanagari text and the transliteration scheme adopted for characters' names in the translation, notes, and glossary. Thus, "Shankar," one of the common names of the god Shiva, appears as *saṅkara* (in its Devanagari equivalent) in the original text and in any notes that quote it directly, but as "Shankar" (the common, modern Hindi pronunciation) in the translation. Standard Sanskritic transliteration (e.g., *śaṅkara*), used in much scholarly writing, is additionally offered in the glossary.

The *Rāmcaritmānas* has already seen nine complete English translations.[2] Although this is not surprising for such an influential scripture—the *Bhagavadgītā* can boast of more than two hundred—it is more than have been accorded any other long premodern vernacular work in the Indian tradition. Why, then, a tenth? The obvious reason, of course, is to try to improve on them. Seven of the translations are into prose, and although two of them have considerable merit (Growse's is spirited and Hill's is admirably accurate), they all produce an effect that is on the whole turgid and "prosaic"—a sad fate for a poem that regularly urges the "singing" of its lines, and whose rhythmic recitation has been moving audiences for more than four centuries. On the other hand, two complete rhyming-verse renditions (by Atkins and Satya Dev), though certainly labors of love

and tours de force in their way, take unfortunate liberties with the meaning of the verses in order to produce a metrical effect that often sounds jangling and trite, like a Victorian greeting card.

The challenges inherent in rendering the *Mānas* in English have been noted before.[3] As a devotional work intended for episodic oral performance, the text seems repetitious when set in a linguistic medium that is normally experienced through individual, silent communion with the printed page, and its frequent use of formulaic phrases (though common in epic poetry worldwide) may appear redundant and saccharine—e.g., "eyes filling with tears" and "limbs thrilling with love" (the latter, one choice for the nearly untranslatable *pulak*—in plain English, "goosebumps" or the dismally medical "horripilation"; besides "thrilling," I sometimes use "trembling," "quivering," "flushed," or "shivering"), or the poet's often-repeated assertion that some person, place, event, or emotion "cannot be described"—which he usually follows with its very apt description. Some of Tulsi's apparent "repetitiveness," however, actually reflects the great asymmetry in lexicons between the two languages. English has more than one verb for "seeing"—the most important and recurrent act in which *Mānas* characters engage, especially "seeing" the unworldly beauty of Ram and Sita—but it does not have (as I have counted in *Bālkāṇḍ* alone) fourteen. Similarly, one can think of several synonyms for the adjective "beautiful"—but not the twenty-two, each slightly different, that Tulsi deploys to convey the overwhelming visual attraction of his divine characters and their world. And, like "camel" in the Arabic lexicon, "lotus" in the *Mānas* is

not a single word—rather, it is, by my count, twenty-nine, each nuanced and suited to different contexts of meaning, meter, rhyme, and alliteration. Tulsi's vocabulary is indeed immense, and he is often credited with having expanded the lexicon of what would become modern Hindi through his revival and adaptation of Sanskrit loanwords; no Sanskrit chauvinist, he also used, according to a recent count, more than ninety Arabic and Persian ones.[4] In English, much of this verbal richness (to echo the poet) simply "cannot be expressed."

What, then, is my impetus and aim in this new translation? My own engagement with the epic began more than three decades ago, after several periods of travel in north India made me realize the extent to which the *Mānas* was ingrained in its living culture. In my initial study of the text as a graduate student, I was fortunate to have a teacher who insisted that I learn to chant its verses aloud to simple melodies—a skill that I have since shared with many students, since I know that it enhances both enjoyment and understanding of the work.[5] My first book grew out of that in-class "performance" and examined the many ways in which the *Mānas* "lives" in its cultural context. My first effort at translation of a section of the epic—its beloved "Fifth Stair," *Sundarkāṇḍ*—came much later.[6] Although I was not altogether happy with it, I loved the opportunity it gave me to engage deeply with the poem and (imaginatively) with its author. It was also my first sustained attempt at what, following the commission and editorial guidelines of the Murty Classical Library of India, I am now attempting to do for the complete epic: produce a straightforward, readable,

free-verse rendering in contemporary language. I readily concede that most of the enchanting music of Tulsidas—his rhyme, alliteration, and almost hypnotic rhythm—is lost in my version. What I seek to preserve, as much as possible, is clarity, compactness of expression, and a certain momentum. I am especially happy to be contributing to a dual-language version, and I hope that serious readers, even if they do not know Hindi, might at least acquire facility with its easy, phonetic script so that they can begin to sound out the lines of the original—for truly, there is verbal magic in every stanza of the *Mānas*.

NOTES

1 The three scholarly editions are Poddar 1938, Mishra 1962, and Shukla et al. 1973.

2 A list appears in the Bibliography.

3 Growse 1891 (1978): lvii–lviii; Hill 1952: xx; Lutgendorf 1991: 29–33.

4 McGregor 2003: 938; Stasik 2009.

5 I would like to pay tribute to my University of Chicago mentors, Kali Charan Bahl (who taught me to chant the *Mānas*) and Colin P. Masica (who helped me understand its cultural impact). A. K. Ramanujan and Wendy Doniger were also inspirations, both as scholars and translators.

6 Lutgendorf 1994b, 1995, 2001.

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Uttarkāṇḍ

Prologue

१ वर्णानामर्थसंघानां रसानां छन्दसामपि ।
मङ्गलानां च कर्त्तारौ वन्दे वाणीविनायकौ ॥

२ भवानीशङ्करौ वन्दे श्रद्धाविश्वासरूपिणौ ।
याभ्यां विना न पश्यन्ति सिद्धाः स्वान्तःस्थमीश्वरम् ॥

३ वन्दे बोधमयं नित्यं गुरुं शङ्कररूपिणम् ।
यमाश्रितो हि वक्रोऽपि चन्द्रः सर्वत्र वन्द्यते ॥

४ सीतारामगुणग्रामपुण्यारण्यविहारिणौ ।
वन्दे विशुद्धविज्ञानौ कवीश्वरकपीश्वरौ ॥

५ उद्भवस्थितिसंहारकारिणीं क्लेशहारिणीम् ।
सर्वश्रेयस्करीं सीतां नतोऽहं रामवल्लभाम् ॥

I salute the creators of syllables and meanings, 1
poetic moods and meters,
and all auspiciousness—
goddess of speech, and Ganesh, lord of minions.[1]

I salute Bhavani and Shankar, 2
embodiments of reverence and faith,[2]
without whom perfected ones are unable
to see God within themselves.

I salute the guru, ever abounding in knowledge, 3
the very embodiment of Shankar,
through whose sheltering grace
the crooked moon is everywhere revered.[3]

I salute the two who happily roam 4
the sacred forest of Sita and Ram's myriad virtues,
the embodiment of purity and of wisdom—
lord of poets and lord of monkeys.*

To the source of cosmic creation, sustenance, 5
and destruction, remover of affliction
and bestower of all blessings—
to Sita, Ram's beloved, I bow in homage.

* Valmiki and Hanuman.

६ यन्मायावशवर्त्ति विश्वमखिलं ब्रह्मादिदेवासुरा
यत्सत्त्वादमृषैव भाति सकलं रज्जौ यथाहेर्भ्रमः।
यत्पादप्लवमेकमेव हि भवाम्भोधेस्तितीर्षावतां
वन्देऽहं तमशेषकारणपरं रामाख्यमीशं हरिम्॥

७ नानापुराणनिगमागमसम्मतं यद्
रामायणे निगदितं क्वचिदन्यतोऽपि।
स्वान्तःसुखाय तुलसी रघुनाथगाथा-
भाषानिबन्धमतिमञ्जुलमातनोति॥

०क जो सुमिरत सिधि होइ गन नायक करिबर बदन।
करउ अनुग्रह सोइ बुद्धि रासि सुभ गुन सदन॥

०ख मूक होइ बाचाल पंगु चढ़इ गिरिबर गहन।
जासु कृपाँ सो दयाल द्रवउ सकल कलि मल दहन॥

To him—whose illusory power sways all creation, 6
Brahma, gods and demons,[4]
by whose existence everything appears real,
like a rope mistaken for a snake,
whose feet are the only raft for those
yearning to cross the sea of rebirth,
and who transcends an infinity of causes—
to Lord Hari, who is called Ram, I give praise.

In accordance with many *purāṇas,* 7
Vedic texts, and sacred treatises,[5]
and with what is recounted in the Ramayana
and in other places, too,
Tulsi, for his own inner joy,
extends the saga of the lord of Raghus
as a most delightful composition set in common speech.

He whose recollection brings success, 0a
great elephant-headed lord of legions,
a mass of wisdom and abode of auspiciousness—
may he be gracious to me.[6]

He by whose grace the mute gain eloquence 0b
and the lame scale lofty summits—
may that merciful one, who burns all the dross
of this dark age, take pity on me.[7]

०ग नील सरोरुह स्याम तरुन अरुन बारिज नयन।
करउ सो मम उर धाम सदा छीरसागर सयन॥

०घ कुंद इंदु सम देह उमा रमन करुना अयन।
जाहि दीन पर नेह करउ कृपा मर्दन मयन॥

०ङ बंदउँ गुरु पद कंज कृपा सिंधु नररूप हरि।
महामोह तम पुंज जासु बचन रबि कर निकर॥

१ बंदउँ गुरु पद पदुम परागा।
सुरुचि सुबास सरस अनुरागा॥
अमिअ मूरिमय चूरन चारू।
समन सकल भव रुज परिवारू॥
२ सुकृति संभु तन बिमल बिभूती।
मंजुल मंगल मोद प्रसूती॥
जन मन मंजु मुकुर मल हरनी।
किएँ तिलक गुन गन बस करनी॥
३ श्रीगुर पद नख मनि गन जोती।
सुमिरत दिब्य दृष्टि हियँ होती॥
दलन मोह तम सो सप्रकासू।
बड़े भाग उर आवइ जासू॥
४ उघरहिं बिमल बिलोचन ही के।
मिटहिं दोष दुख भव रजनी के॥

He whose body is dusky as a blue lotus, 0c
with eyes like red lotuses newly opened,
who reclines forever on the milk ocean—
may he make his home in my heart.

He whose limbs are white as jasmine and the moon, 0d
Uma's lover, mercy's abode,
and Kama's slayer, who is most tender to the meek—
may he show me his grace.

I adore the pure feet of my guru, 0e
an ocean of kindness, God in human form,[8]
whose speech is a spray of sunbeams
in the massed darkness of delusion.

I worship the dust of my master's holy feet, 1
fragrant and lovely as lotus pollen,
medicinal powder of the root of immortality
that suppresses the whole clan of worldly ills.
Pure ash on the Shiva-body of virtue, 2
generating blessedness and bliss,
it takes tarnish from the heart's mirror,[9]
and, worn on the brow, commands all virtues.
His toenails are gemstones, whose radiance, 3
but recalled, gives the heart divine sight.
That effulgence cracks deluding darkness—
how fortunate the one whose heart it fills!
The clear inner eyes are uncovered, 4
erasing sin and sorrow of worldly night,

सूझहिं राम चरित मनि मानिक ।
गुपुत प्रगट जहँ जो जेहि खानिक ॥

१ जथा सुअंजन अंजि दृग साधक सिद्ध सुजान ।
कौतुक देखत सैल बन भूतल भूरि निधान ॥

१ गुरु पद रज मृदु मंजुल अंजन ।
नयन अमिअ दृग दोष बिभंजन ॥
तेहिं करि बिमल बिबेक बिलोचन ।
बरनउँ राम चरित भव मोचन ॥
२ बंदउँ प्रथम महीसुर चरना ।
मोह जनित संसय सब हरना ॥
सुजन समाज सकल गुन खानी ।
करउँ प्रनाम सप्रेम सुबानी ॥
३ साधु चरित सुभ चरित कपासू ।
निरस बिसद गुनमय फल जासू ॥
जो सहि दुख परछिद्र दुरावा ।
बंदनीय जेहिं जग जस पावा ॥
४ मुद मंगलमय संत समाजू ।
जो जग जंगम तीरथराजू ॥
राम भक्ति जहँ सुरसरि धारा ।
सरसइ ब्रह्म बिचार प्रचारा ॥

and glittering gems of Ram's deeds are seen,
in whatever mine they lie, hidden or manifest.

Wise seekers and adepts who apply 1
this magical ointment to their eyes
behold vast treasuries of wonders
in mountains, forests, and the earth's depths.

The dust of the guru's feet is a soothing balm, 1
elixir to the eyes, curing defects of sight.
Cleansing with it my eye of discernment,
I recount Ram's deeds, which give deliverance.
First I revere the feet of the gods of this earth,[10] 2
who dispel all doubts born of delusion.
Good people's company is the mine of all merit,
and I salute them with loving words.
The deeds of sadhus are like the cotton plant, 3
with its dry, stainless, many-fibered fruit,
which suffers pain to cover others' flaws
and wins praiseworthy fame in the world.[11]
The company of holy ones is joyful and blessed, 4
a king of pilgrim-sites[12] wandering the world.
Devotion to Ram is its Ganga stream,
its Sarasvati, the teaching of mystic knowledge.

५ बिधि निषेधमय कलिमल हरनी ।
करम कथा रबिनंदनि बरनी ॥
हरि हर कथा बिराजति बेनी ।
सुनत सकल मुद मंगल देनी ॥
६ बटु बिस्वास अचल निज धरमा ।
तीरथराज समाज सुकरमा ॥
सबहि सुलभ सब दिन सब देसा ।
सेवत सादर समन कलेसा ॥
७ अकथ अलौकिक तीरथराऊ ।
देइ सद्य फल प्रगट प्रभाऊ ॥

२ सुनि समुझहिं जन मुदित मन मज्जहिं अति अनुराग ।
लहहिं चारि फल अछत तनु साधु समाज प्रयाग ॥

१ मज्जन फल पेखिअ ततकाला ।
काक होहिं पिक बकउ मराला ॥
सुनि आचरज करै जनि कोई ।
सतसंगति महिमा नहिं गोई ॥
२ बालमीक नारद घटजोनी ।
निज निज मुखनि कही निज होनी ॥
जलचर थलचर नभचर नाना ।
जे जड़ चेतन जीव जहाना ॥
३ मति कीरति गति भूति भलाई ।
जब जेहिं जतन जहाँ जेहिं पाई ॥

The telling of good and bad acts, removing the stain 5
of this dark age, is its sun-born Yamuna,
and tales of Vishnu and Shiva its sparkling confluence—
just hearing them gives every joy and blessing.
Its undying banyan[13] is firm faith in one's own duty, 6
and its concourse of pilgrims, good deeds.
Accessible to all, everyday, everywhere,
when reverently worshiped, it destroys afflictions.
Indescribable, transcendent, this king of shrines 7
grants rewards instantly, revealing its power.

Good people who listen and comprehend 2
with joyful hearts, fervently bathe
in that confluence of sadhus
and gain the four goals[14] in this very life.

The effect of immersion is visible at once— 1
crow turns to cuckoo and heron to *haṃsa*.[15]
Let no one wonder at hearing of this,
for the power of holy fellowship is no secret.
Valmiki, Narad, and pot-born Agastya[16] 2
have each told it with his own tongue.
Moving on water, earth, or in the sky,
the world's countless beings, sentient or not,
whatever they strive for and obtain— 3
wisdom, fame, salvation, glory, goodness—

सो जानब सतसंग प्रभाऊ ।
लोकहुँ बेद न आन उपाऊ ॥
४ बिनु सतसंग बिबेक न होई ।
राम कृपा बिनु सुलभ न सोई ॥
सतसंगत मुद मंगल मूला ।
सोइ फल सिधि सब साधन फूला ॥
५ सठ सुधरहिं सतसंगति पाई ।
पारस परस कुधात सुहाई ॥
बिधि बस सुजन कुसंगत परहीं ।
फनि मनि सम निज गुन अनुसरहीं ॥
६ बिधि हरि हर कबि कोबिद बानी ।
कहत साधु महिमा सकुचानी ॥
सो मो सन कहि जात न कैसें ।
साक बनिक मनि गुन गन जैसें ॥

३क बंदउँ संत समान चित हित अनहित नहिं कोइ ।
अंजलि गत सुभ सुमन जिमि सम सुगंध कर दोइ ॥

३ख संत सरल चित जगत हित जानि सुभाउ सनेहु ।
बालबिनय सुनि करि कृपा राम चरन रति देहु ॥

know to be but the grace of good companionship.
Worldly wisdom and Veda offer no other recourse.
Without good fellowship, there is no discernment, 4
and without Ram's mercy, that, too, is elusive.
Holy company is the root of joy and blessing,
its fruit, attainment, its flower, all spiritual discipline.
Scoundrels reform if they find good companions, 5
as a touch of the alchemy stone transforms base metal,
and if fate casts good folk among bad,
they maintain their own virtue, like the cobra's gem.[17]
Even the triple gods,* poets, and scholars 6
hesitate to speak of the glory of holy ones,
and I can no more tell of it
than a hawker of greens can assay a diamond.

I praise the equanimity of saintly ones, 3a
who favor and oppose no one,
like an auspicious flower offering
that bestows equal fragrance on both hands.

They are simple-hearted benefactors of the world 3b
and I know their affectionate nature.
Hearing my childlike plea, may they grant me
fervent love for Ram's feet.

* Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva.

१ बहुरि बंदि खल गन सतिभाएँ।
जे बिनु काज दाहिनेहु बाएँ॥
पर हित हानि लाभ जिन्ह केरें।
उजरें हरष बिषाद बसेरें॥
२ हरि हर जस राकेस राहु से।
पर अकाज भट सहसबाहु से॥
जे पर दोष लखहिं सहसाखी।
पर हित घृत जिन्ह के मन माखी॥
३ तेज कृसानु रोष महिषेसा।
अघ अवगुन धन धनी धनेसा॥
उदय केत सम हित सबही के।
कुंभकरन सम सोवत नीके॥
४ पर अकाजु लगि तनु परिहरहीं।
जिमि हिम उपल कृषी दलि गरहीं॥
बंदउँ खल जस सेष सरोषा।
सहस बदन बरनइ पर दोषा॥
५ पुनि प्रनवउँ पृथुराज समाना।
पर अघ सुनइ सहस दस काना॥
बहुरि सक्र सम बिनवउँ तेही।
संतत सुरानीक हित जेही॥
६ बचन बज्र जेहि सदा पिआरा।
सहस नयन पर दोष निहारा॥

Next I sincerely praise the legion of scoundrels, 1
who, without cause, return bad for good,
who find their profit in others' loss,
rejoice in their ruin, and mope over their success.
Eclipse demons to the moon of the gods' renown, 2
they are thousand-armed heroes in hurting others,
who peer with myriad eyes at others' blemishes
and whose minds fall like flies into the ghee of their joy.
Like the god of death in their fiery anger, 3
and rich as Kuber in the treasury of sins,
they arise, like ruinous Ketu, to plague all—
better that they sleep on, like Kumbhakaran![18]
They give up their lives for others' undoing, 4
like hailstones that melt after wrecking the crop.
I praise those villains as angry world-serpents,
thousand-mouthed in recounting others' faults.
Then, too, I hail them as like King Prithu, 5
with ten thousand ears to hear others' sins.
Again, I salute them as akin to Indra,
who is ever bolstered by strong liquor,[19]
cherishes the thunderbolt of cruel words, 6
and peers thousand-eyed at others' flaws.

४ उदासीन अरि मीत हित सुनत जरहिं खल रीति।
जानि पानि जुग जोरि जन बिनती करइ सप्रीति॥

१ मैं अपनी दिसि कीन्ह निहोरा।
तिन्ह निज ओर न लाउब भोरा॥
बायस पलिअहिं अति अनुरागा।
होहिं निरामिष कबहुँ कि कागा॥
२ बंदउँ संत असज्जन चरना।
दुखप्रद उभय बीच कछु बरना॥
बिछुरत एक प्रान हरि लेहीं।
मिलत एक दुख दारुन देहीं॥
३ उपजहिं एक संग जग माहीं।
जलज जोंक जिमि गुन बिलगाहीं॥
सुधा सुरा सम साधु असाधू।
जनक एक जग जलधि अगाधू॥
४ भल अनभल निज निज करतूती।
लहत सुजस अपलोक बिभूती॥
सुधा सुधाकर सुरसरि साधू।
गरल अनल कलिमल सरि ब्याधू॥
५ गुन अवगुन जानत सब कोई।
जो जेहि भाव नीक तेहि सोई॥

५ भलो भलाइहि पै लहइ लहइ निचाइहि नीचु।
सुधा सराहिअ अमरताँ गरल सराहिअ मीचु॥

If they hear of anyone's good fortune— 4
neutral, foe, or friend—they flare up.
Aware of this, I join my hands in homage
and lovingly entreat them.

For my part, I have beseeched them, 1
but they are unlikely to change their ways.
Though you rear it with utmost affection,
will a crow ever become vegetarian?
I reverence the feet of saints and scoundrels. 2
Both cause sorrow, but with a difference:
separation from one steals away the soul
and mere association with the other gives bitter pain.
Though arisen together in this world, 3
they differ in nature like lotus and leech.
Like nectar and liquor, the holy and the wicked
are born of the world's one fathomless sea.[20]
By their own kind or unkind acts 4
each garners the prize of fame or disgrace.
Nectar, moonlight, holy Ganga, and saints,
poison, wildfire, polluted stream,[21] and savage hunter—
all know the merit and demerits of each, 5
but favor whatever suits their nature.

The good accrue goodness, 5
the wicked, wickedness,
as nectar is lauded for immortality
and poison for dealing death.

१ खल अघ अगुन साधु गुन गाहा।
उभय अपार उदधि अवगाहा॥
तेहि तें कछु गुन दोष बखाने।
संग्रह त्याग न बिनु पहिचाने॥
२ भलेउ पोच सब बिधि उपजाए।
गनि गुन दोष बेद बिलगाए॥
कहहिं बेद इतिहास पुराना।
बिधि प्रपंचु गुन अवगुन साना॥
३ दुख सुख पाप पुन्य दिन राती।
साधु असाधु सुजाति कुजाती॥
दानव देव ऊँच अरु नीचू।
अमिअ सुजीवनु माहुरु मीचू॥
४ माया ब्रह्म जीव जगदीसा।
लच्छि अलच्छि रंक अवनीसा॥
कासी मग सुरसरि क्रमनासा।
मरु मारव महिदेव गवासा॥
५ सरग नरक अनुराग बिरागा।
निगमागम गुन दोष बिभागा॥

६ जड़ चेतन गुन दोषमय बिस्व कीन्ह करतार।
संत हंस गुन गहहिं पय परिहरि बारि बिकार॥

The sagas of sinners' vices and saints' virtues 1
are both boundless, fathomless seas.
But a few examples of each are recounted here,
for you cannot amass or avoid what you do not
understand.
Good and ill are both offspring of the creator, 2
but sacred lore has methodically delineated them.
The Veda, epics, and *purāṇas* all proclaim
Brahma's creation as a blend of virtue and vice,
pain and pleasure, sin and merit, day and night, 3
saint and scoundrel, highborn and base,
demon and deity, lofty and low,
ambrosia of life, venom of death,
illusion and God, creature and supreme Lord, 4
abundance and poverty, pauper and king,
Kashi and Magadh, holy Ganga and vile Karmanasha,
Malwa and Marwar,[22] Brahman and butcher,
heaven and hell, passion and detachment— 5
the scriptures have categorized their merits and flaws.

The creator has fabricated a world 6
full of dull and sentient, good and evil.
Saintly souls, like holy *haṃsas,* sip virtue's milk
and discard the water of sin.

१ अस बिबेक जब देइ बिधाता।
तब तजि दोष गुनहिं मनु राता॥
काल सुभाउ करम बरिआईं।
भलेउ प्रकृति बस चुकइ भलाईं॥
२ सो सुधारि हरिजन जिमि लेहीं।
दलि दुख दोष बिमल जसु देहीं॥
खलउ करहिं भल पाइ सुसंगू।
मिटइ न मलिन सुभाउ अभंगू॥
३ लखि सुबेष जग बंचक जेऊ।
बेष प्रताप पूजिअहिं तेऊ॥
उघरहिं अंत न होइ निबाहू।
कालनेमि जिमि रावन राहू॥
४ किएहुँ कुबेषु साधु सनमानू।
जिमि जग जामवंत हनुमानू॥
हानि कुसंग सुसंगति लाहू।
लोकहुँ बेद बिदित सब काहू॥
५ गगन चढ़इ रज पवन प्रसंगा।
कीचहिं मिलइ नीच जल संगा॥
साधु असाधु सदन सुक सारीं।
सुमिरहिं राम देहिं गनि गारीं॥
६ धूम कुसंगति कारिख होई।
लिखिअ पुरान मंजु मसि सोई॥
सोइ जल अनल अनिल संघाता।
होइ जलद जग जीवन दाता॥

When fate grants such discrimination, 1
the heart abandons evil and adheres to good.
But under the sway of time, character, karma,
or nature, even the good may stray from virtue.
Though Hari's devotees amend such failings, 2
and replace sorrow and sin with pure renown,
scoundrels may act well in good company,
yet their tainted nature endures unchanged.
Seeing a cheat in pleasing guise, the world 3
is duped by appearance and breaks into praise.
But he fails in the end and is exposed,
like Kalnemi, Ravan, and Rahu.[23]
Yet the good, even in lowly guise, are honored 4
by the world, like Jambavan and Hanuman.
Wicked company is loss, good company, gain—
so Veda and worldly wisdom affirm, and everyone knows.
Dust rises to the sky in contact with wind 5
but turns to mud when mixed with earthly water.
Housed among good people or bad, parrots and mynahs
learn to repeat Ram's name or countless curses.
In bad company smoke becomes soot; 6
in good, fine ink for writing sacred tales;
and joined with water, heat, and wind,
a rain cloud giving life to the world.

७क ग्रह भेषज जल पवन पट पाइ कुजोग सुजोग।
होहिं कुबस्तु सुबस्तु जग लखहिं सुलच्छन लोग॥

७ख सम प्रकास तम पाख दुहुँ नाम भेद बिधि कीन्ह।
ससि सोषक पोषक समुझि जग जस अपजस
दीन्ह॥

७ग जड़ चेतन जग जीव जत सकल राममय जानि।
बंदउँ सब के पद कमल सदा जोरि जुग पानि॥

७घ देव दनुज नर नाग खग प्रेत पितर गंधर्ब।
बंदुउँ किंनर रजनिचर कृपा करहु अब सर्ब॥

१ आकर चारि लाख चौरासी।
जाति जीव जल थल नभ बासी॥
सीय राममय सब जग जानी।
करउँ प्रनाम जोरि जुग पानी॥
२ जानि कृपाकर किंकर मोहू।
सब मिलि करहु छाड़ि छल छोहू॥
निज बुधि बल भरोस मोहि नाहीं।
तातें बिनय करउँ सब पाहीं॥
३ करन चहउँ रघुपति गुन गाहा।
लघु मति मोरि चरित अवगाहा॥

Planets, herbs, wind, water, clothing— 7a
through good or bad association
become good things or bad in this world,
as discerning people realize.

Light and dark fortnights are equal, yet the creator 7b
distinguished them by name,
and the world values them according to whether
they nurture or starve the moon.

Knowing all souls in creation, inert or sentient, 7c
to be imbued with Ram,
I forever bow at their blessed feet,
my palms joined in reverence.

Gods, demons, humans, snakes, and birds, 7d
ghosts, ancestors, and demigods,
celestial singers and earthly monsters—
I propitiate you all. Give me your blessing!

In four orders, eighty-four hundred thousand 1
forms of life inhabit waters, earth, and sky.
Knowing the whole world to be imbued with Sita-Ram,[24]
I pay homage, hands joined in supplication.
Considering me the slave of the merciful one,[25] 2
may all relinquish their cunning and be kind.
I have no faith in my own intellect,
and so I humbly entreat you all.
I want to sing the saga of the Raghu lord,[26] 3
but my wit is slight and his deeds unfathomable.

सूझ न एकउ अंग उपाऊ।
मन मति रंक मनोरथ राऊ॥
४ मति अति नीच ऊँचि रुचि आछी।
चहिअ अमिअ जग जुरइ न छाछी॥
छमिहहिं सज्जन मोरि ढिठाई।
सुनिहहिं बालबचन मन लाई॥
५ जौं बालक कह तोतरि बाता।
सुनहिं मुदित मन पितु अरु माता॥
हँसिहहिं कूर कुटिल कुबिचारी।
जे पर दूषन भूषनधारी॥
६ निज कबित्त केहि लाग न नीका।
सरस होउ अथवा अति फीका॥
जे पर भनिति सुनत हरषाहीं।
ते बर पुरुष बहुत जग नाहीं॥
७ जग बहु नर सर सरि सम भाई।
जे निज बाढ़ि बढ़हिं जल पाई॥
सज्जन सकृत सिंधु सम कोई।
देखि पूर बिधु बाढ़इ जोई॥

८ भाग छोट अभिलाषु बड़ करउँ एक बिस्वास।
पैहहिं सुख सुनि सुजन सब खल करिहहिं उपहास॥

I see no remedy for this dilemma—
a beggarly heart with regal aspirations,
base faculties with a lofty aim, 4
craving nectar when the world won't even offer whey.[27]
But good people will pardon my temerity
and listen attentively to my childlike talk,
as when a baby's lisping speech 5
is heard with delight by father and mother.
The cruel, devious, and depraved will laugh—
they who primp themselves on others' failings.
Who doesn't relish his own verses, 6
whether sweet or utterly insipid?
But good men who delight in listening to others
are precious few in this world.
Brother, most are like ponds and streams 7
that swell up when they get rainfall.
Rare is that noble one who, like the sea,
rises at sight of the full moon.

My luck is wretched, my aim lofty, 8
yet I cling to one conviction—
that all good listeners will feel delight
and only wicked ones will mock.

१ खल परिहास होइ हित मोरा।
काक कहहिं कलकंठ कठोरा॥
हंसहिं बक दादुर चातकही।
हँसहिं मलिन खल बिमल बतकही॥
२ कबित रसिक न राम पद नेहू।
तिन्ह कहँ सुखद हास रस एहू॥
भाषा भनिति भोरि मति मोरी।
हँसिबे जोग हँसें नहिं खोरी॥
३ प्रभु पद प्रीति न सामुझि नीकी।
तिन्हहि कथा सुनि लागिहि फीकी॥
हरि हर पद रति मति न कुतरकी।
तिन्ह कहुँ मधुर कथा रघुबर की॥
४ राम भगति भूषित जियँ जानी।
सुनिहहिं सुजन सराहि सुबानी॥
कबि न होउँ नहिं बचन प्रबीनू।
सकल कला सब बिद्या हीनू॥
५ आखर अरथ अलंकृति नाना।
छंद प्रबंध अनेक बिधाना॥
भाव भेद रस भेद अपारा।
कबित दोष गुन बिबिध प्रकारा॥
६ कबित बिबेक एक नहिं मोरें।
सत्य कहउँ लिखि कागद कोरें॥

The jeering of scoundrels will be good for me— 1
as the crow pronounces the cuckoo's voice harsh,
heron mocks *haṃsa,* and frog the dew-bird,
so the wicked laugh at purer speech.
Connoisseurs of poetry, without love for Ram's feet,[28] 2
may be amused by this as mere farce.
My language is vernacular, my wit feeble—
it's laughable, so there's no fault in laughing!
Without love for the Lord and good understanding, 3
listeners will find this story utterly bland.
But to right-minded lovers of Hari and Hara's feet,
the great Raghu's tale will be sweet.
Knowing it is adorned with devotion, 4
good folk will listen and sing its praise.
I am no poet nor clever wordsmith
and am deficient in all art and science.
For diverse syllables, ornaments, meanings, 5
endless catalogues of poetic meters,
innumerable fine points of aesthetics,
and countless virtues and flaws of verse,
I have not an iota of poetic discrimination— 6
this truth I proclaim and put on paper![29]

९ भनिति मोरि सब गुन रहित बिस्व बिदित गुन एक।
सो बिचारि सुनिहहिं सुमति जिन्ह कें बिमल बिबेक॥

१ एहि महँ रघुपति नाम उदारा।
अति पावन पुरान श्रुति सारा॥
मंगल भवन अमंगल हारी।
उमा सहित जेहि जपत पुरारी॥
२ भनिति बिचित्र सुकबि कृत जोऊ।
राम नाम बिनु सोह न सोऊ॥
बिधुबदनी सब भाँति सँवारी।
सोह न बसन बिना बर नारी॥
३ सब गुन रहित कुकबि कृत बानी।
राम नाम जस अंकित जानी॥
सादर कहहिं सुनहिं बुध ताही।
मधुकर सरिस संत गुनग्राही॥
४ जदपि कबित रस एकउ नाहीं।
राम प्रताप प्रगट एहि माहीं॥
सोइ भरोस मोरें मन आवा।
केहिं न सुसंग बड़प्पनु पावा॥
५ धूमउ तजइ सहज करुआई।
अगरु प्रसंग सुगंध बसाई॥
भनिति भदेस बस्तु भलि बरनी।
राम कथा जग मंगल करनी॥

My poetry lacks every merit—but one, 9
known to all the world.
Those with clear insight will ponder this
and listen attentively.

For it contains the Raghu lord's bountiful name, 1
immaculate essence of Veda and *purāṇa*,
abode of blessing, remover of ill omen,
constantly repeated by both Shiva and Uma.
Even a brilliant work by a master poet, 2
if it lacks Ram's name, has no loveliness.
Though fair-faced and richly bejeweled,
a lovely woman without clothes is unseemly.
Words composed by a bad poet, lacking all merit, 3
if known to be stamped with Ram's name and glory,
are reverently heard and sung by the wise,
for saints, like bees, collect virtue's nectar.
Though it lacks every aesthetic emotion, 4
this work manifests Ram's majesty,
and this alone gives my heart hope,
for who hasn't prospered in good company?
Smoke loses its caustic nature, 5
joined with aloe, to become incense,
and my crude verses narrate a grand theme—
Ram's story, which blesses the world.

६ मंगल करनि कलिमल हरनि
तुलसी कथा रघुनाथ की ।
गति कूर कबिता सरित की
ज्यों सरित पावन पाथ की ॥
प्रभु सुजस संगति भनिति भलि
होइहि सुजन मन भावनी ।
भव अंग भूति मसान की
सुमिरत सुहावनि पावनी ॥

१०क प्रिय लागिहि अति सबहि मम भनिति राम जस संग ।
दारु बिचारु कि करइ कोउ बंदिअ मलय प्रसंग ॥

१०ख स्याम सुरभि पय बिसद अति गुनद करहिं सब पान ।
गिरा ग्राम्य सिय राम जस गावहिं सुनहिं सुजान ॥

१ मनि मानिक मुकुता छबि जैसी ।
अहि गिरि गज सिर सोह न तैसी ॥
नृप किरीट तरुनी तनु पाई ।
लहहिं सकल सोभा अधिकाई ॥
२ तैसेहिं सुकबि कबित बुध कहहीं ।
उपजहिं अनत अनत छबि लहहीं ॥
भगति हेतु बिधि भवन बिहाई ।
सुमिरत सारद आवति धाई ॥

Tulsi says,[30] the tale of the Raghu lord 6
blesses the world and cleanses the Kali age,
and in its crooked course, my verse
resembles that of Ganga's pure water.
Contact with the Lord's fame enables my speech
to gladden good people's hearts,
as the ash of cremations, seen on Shiva's body,
becomes beautiful and cleansing.

My words, linked with Ram's greatness, 10a
will be cherished by all,
like the famed sandal trees of Mount Malay[31]—
who sees them as mere wood?

Though a cow is black, everyone drinks 10b
her pure, wholesome milk.
So the wise sing and hear, in rustic speech,
the fame of Sita-Ram.

The brilliance of diamond, ruby, and pearl 1
does not sparkle on serpent, mountain, or elephant's
head.[32]
But on a king's crown or a woman's body
all three attain their full splendor.
Just so, the wise say, a good poet's verses 2
arise in one place but gain luster elsewhere.
Invoked with devotion, the goddess Sarasvati
will leave Brahma's house and come running.

३ राम चरित सर बिनु अन्हवाएँ।
सो श्रम जाइ न कोटि उपाएँ॥
कबि कोबिद अस हृदयँ बिचारी।
गावहिं हरि जस कलि मल हारी॥
४ कीन्हें प्राकृत जन गुन गाना।
सिर धुनि गिरा लगत पछिताना॥
हृदय सिंधु मति सीप समाना।
स्वाति सारदा कहहिं सुजाना॥
५ जौं बरषइ बर बारि बिचारू।
होहिं कबित मुकुतामनि चारू॥

११ जुगुति बेधि पुनि पोहिअहिं रामचरित बर ताग।
पहिरहिं सज्जन बिमल उर सोभा अति अनुराग॥

१ जे जनमे कलिकाल कराला।
करतब बायस बेष मराला॥
चलत कुपंथ बेद मग छाँड़े।
कपट कलेवर कलि मल भाँड़े॥
२ बंचक भगत कहाइ राम के।
किंकर कंचन कोह काम के॥
तिन्ह महँ प्रथम रेख जग मोरी।
धींग धरमध्वज धंधक धोरी॥
३ जौं अपने अवगुन सब कहऊँ।
बाढ़इ कथा पार नहिं लहऊँ॥

Yet unless she is bathed in the lake of Ram's deeds,[33] 3
she will not shed her travel fatigue, do what one may.
Pondering this in their hearts, poets and scholars
sing Hari's glory, which cleanses this dark age.
If they chant the praises of worldly people 4
Lady Speech beats her brow in regret.
In heart's ocean, intelligence is an oyster
in which Sharada seeds inspiration, say the wise.[34]
If watered with a shower of clear insight, 5
the lustrous pearl of poetry will appear.

Pierced by craft and threaded 11
on the fine strand of Ram's deeds,
it is worn on the pure breasts of good people,
shining with fervent love.

Among those born in the awful Kali age— 1
crows in deeds, though decked out as *haṃsas,*
who leave the Vedic path and take to evil ways,
false-hearted vessels for the era's filth,
crooks calling themselves devotees of Ram, 2
slaves of gold, lust, and ire—
among all these, I hold first place in the world,
tediously flaunting the flag of dharma.
If I were to recount all my vices, 3
I would never get through the voluminous tale.

ताते मैं अति अलप बखाने।
थोरे महुँ जानिहहिं सयाने॥
४ समुझि बिबिधि बिधि बिनती मोरी।
कोउ न कथा सुनि देइहि खोरी॥
एतेहु पर करिहहिं जे असंका।
मोहि ते अधिक ते जड़ मति रंका॥
५ कबि न होउँ नहिं चतुर कहावउँ।
मति अनुरूप राम गुन गावउँ॥
कहँ रघुपति के चरित अपारा।
कहँ मति मोरि निरत संसारा॥
६ जेहिं मारुत गिरि मेरु उड़ाहीं।
कहहु तूल केहि लेखे माहीं॥
समुझत अमित राम प्रभुताई।
करत कथा मन अति कदराई॥

१२ सारद सेस महेस बिधि आगम निगम पुरान।
नेति नेति कहि जासु गुन करहिं निरंतर गान॥

१ सब जानत प्रभु प्रभुता सोई।
तदपि कहें बिनु रहा न कोई॥
तहाँ बेद अस कारन राखा।
भजन प्रभाउ भाँति बहु भाषा॥
२ एक अनीह अरूप अनामा।
अज सच्चिदानंद पर धामा॥

Hence I have mentioned just a few of them,
but enough to inform the wise.
Considering all my entreaties, 4
no listener ought to fault this story.
One who voices suspicion after all this,
will be an even greater dunce than I!
Though neither a bard nor clever narrator, 5
I sing Ram's greatness as best I can.
Yet how to compare the Raghu lord's boundless acts
to my world-addicted intellect?
In a tempest that can uproot Mount Meru, 6
what can one say of a wisp of cotton-wool?
Pondering Ram's infinite majesty
my mind balks at telling his tale.

Sarasvati and Shesh, Shiva, Brahma, 12
and all revealed scripture and lore
endlessly laud him, yet can only describe him by saying,
"No, he is not this, not that..."[35]

Everyone knows the Lord's divinity is inexpressible, 1
yet none can resist trying to express it.
The Veda has marked the reason for this,
endlessly extolling the power of praise.
That dispassionate one, unformed and nameless, 2
unborn existence-sentience-bliss, ultimate haven,

ब्यापक बिस्वरूप भगवाना।
तेहिं धरि देह चरित कृत नाना॥
३ सो केवल भगतन हित लागी।
परम कृपाल प्रनत अनुरागी॥
जेहि जन पर ममता अति छोहू।
जेहिं करुना करि कीन्ह न कोहू॥
४ गई बहोर गरीब नेवाजू।
सरल सबल साहिब रघुराजू॥
बुध बरनहिं हरि जस अस जानी।
करहिं पुनीत सुफल निज बानी॥
५ तेहिं बल मैं रघुपति गुन गाथा।
कहिहउँ नाइ राम पद माथा॥
मुनिन्ह प्रथम हरि कीरति गाई।
तेहिं मग चलत सुगम मोहि भाई॥

१३ अति अपार जे सरित बर जौं नृप सेतु कराहिं।
चढ़ि पिपीलिकउ परम लघु बिनु श्रम पारहि जाहिं॥

१ एहि प्रकार बल मनहि देखाई।
करिहउँ रघुपति कथा सुहाई॥
ब्यास आदि कबि पुंगव नाना।
जिन्ह सादर हरि सुजस बखाना॥
२ चरन कमल बंदउँ तिन्ह केरे।
पुरवहुँ सकल मनोरथ मेरे॥

that all-pervading and universal Lord,
assuming a body, performs diverse deeds.
These are solely for the sake of devotees, 3
for he is most gracious and loves those who seek refuge.
He loves and cherishes his people,
and, having shown mercy, never becomes angry.
He restores what is lost and befriends the poor, 4
that guileless yet almighty master—king of the Raghus![36]
Reflecting thus, the wise recount Hari's fame
and so purify and bless their own tongues.
Through their power, I will tell Lord Raghu's 5
saga, bowing my head at Ram's feet.
Holy sages first sang of Hari's fame,
making the path easy for me, brother.

However vast a great river, once a king 13
has ordained a causeway,
the tiniest ant can amble on
and effortlessly reach the far shore.

Having thus reassured my heart, 1
I will tell Lord Raghu's lovely tale.
To the mighty poets, Vyasa and Valmiki,[37]
who have reverently narrated Hari's glory,
I bow, worshiping their blessed feet. 2
May they fulfill all my yearnings!

कलि के कबिन्ह करउँ परनामा।
जिन्ह बरने रघुपति गुन ग्रामा॥
३ जे प्राकृत कबि परम सयाने।
भाषाँ जिन्ह हरि चरित बखाने॥
भए जे अहहिं जे होइहहिं आगें।
प्रनवउँ सबहि कपट सब त्यागें॥
४ होहु प्रसन्न देहु बरदानू।
साधु समाज भनिति सनमानू॥
जो प्रबंध बुध नहिं आदरहीं।
सो श्रम बादि बाल कबि करहीं॥
५ कीरति भनिति भूति भलि सोई।
सुरसरि सम सब कहँ हित होई॥
राम सुकीरति भनिति भदेसा।
असमंजस अस मोहि अँदेसा॥
६ तुम्हरी कृपाँ सुलभ सोउ मोरे।
सिअनि सुहावनि टाट पटोरे॥

१४क सरल कबित कीरति बिमल सोइ आदरहिं सुजान।
सहज बयर बिसराइ रिपु जो सुनि करहिं बखान॥

१४ख सो न होइ बिनु बिमल मति मोहि मति बल अति थोर।
करहु कृपा हरि जस कहउँ पुनि पुनि करउँ निहोर॥

I salute the singers of this dark era
who describe Ram's countless virtues,
ingenious poets of the vernacular, 3
who narrate Hari's deeds in common speech,
all who have been, are now, or yet will be,
I reverence, in utter sincerity.
Be pleased, and grant me the boon 4
that my words be honored among the holy.
For a work not respected by the wise
is but an immature poet's worthless labor.
Only that fame, that eloquence, that power is good, 5
which, like Ganga, the gods' own river, is good for all.
Ram's glorious renown and my clumsy verse—
this great disparity still troubles me,
but by your grace, poets, I will succeed, 6
for silk embroidery beautifies even burlap.

Simple poetry that tells of lofty deeds 14a
is honored by the discerning,
and even rivals, listening, forget their enmity
and break into praise.

But that requires clear intellect, 14b
whereas mine is most feeble,
hence my repeated entreaty:
grant me grace to narrate Hari's fame.

१४ग कबि कोबिद रघुबर चरित मानस मंजु मराल।
बालबिनय सुनि सुरुचि लखि मो पर होहु कृपाल॥

१४घ बंदउँ मुनि पद कंजु रामायन जेहिं निरमयउ।
सखर सुकोमल मंजु दोष रहित दूषन सहित॥

१४ङ बंदउँ चारिउ बेद भव बारिधि बोहित सरिस।
जिन्हहि न सपनेहुँ खेद बरनत रघुबर बिसद जसु॥

१४च बंदउँ बिधि पद रेनु भव सागर जेहिं कीन्ह जहँ।
संत सुधा ससि धेनु प्रगटे खल बिष बारुनी॥

१४छ बिबुध बिप्र बुध ग्रह चरन बंदि कहउँ कर जोरि।
होइ प्रसन्न पुरवहु सकल मंजु मनोरथ मोरि॥

You singers and scholars are sacred birds 14c
on the high lake of Lord Raghu's acts.
Hear the petition of this well-meaning child
and show me mercy.

I reverence the pure feet of that sage 14d
who first crafted the *Rāmāyaṇa*,
melodious and flawless,
though containing "Harshness" and "Fault."[38]

I venerate the four Vedas, which are like boats 14e
to cross the world-ocean,
and never for a moment tire
in their pure praise of Lord Raghu.[39]

I honor the dust of Brahma's feet, he who made 14f
this world-ocean, out of which came
the nectar, moon, and wishing cow of saints,
and the venom and harsh liquor of sinners.

With joined hands I bow to the feet of gods, seers, 14g
sages, and planetary powers.
May they be pleased
and fulfill all my lofty ambitions.

१ पुनि बंदउँ सारद सुरसरिता।
जुगल पुनीत मनोहर चरिता॥
मज्जन पान पाप हर एका।
कहत सुनत एक हर अबिबेका॥
२ गुर पितु मातु महेस भवानी।
प्रनवउँ दीनबंधु दिन दानी॥
सेवक स्वामि सखा सिय पी के।
हित निरुपधि सब बिधि तुलसी के॥
३ कलि बिलोकि जग हित हर गिरिजा।
साबर मंत्र जाल जिन्ह सिरिजा॥
अनमिल आखर अरथ न जापू।
प्रगट प्रभाउ महेस प्रतापू॥
४ सो उमेस मोहि पर अनुकूला।
करिहिं कथा मुद मंगल मूला॥
सुमिरि सिवा सिव पाइ पसाऊ।
बरनउँ रामचरित चित चाऊ॥
५ भनिति मोरि सिव कृपाँ बिभाती।
ससि समाज मिलि मनहुँ सुराती॥
जे एहि कथहि सनेह समेता।
कहिहहिं सुनिहहिं समुझि सचेता॥
६ होइहहिं राम चरन अनुरागी।
कलि मल रहित सुमंगल भागी॥

Next I salute Sarasvati* and divine Ganga, 1
both of holy, enchanting character.
One removes sins through a bath or sip,
and just to speak or hear of the other removes ignorance.
I adore my guru, father and mother—Shiva and Bhavani,[40] 2
helpers of the poor and daily providers,
servants, masters, and friends of Sita's beloved,
and wholehearted benefactors of Tulsidas.
Noting this dark age, for the world's well-being, Hara 3
and the mountain's daughter† made a host of mantras[41]—
incoherent syllables, meaningless to utter,
yet their potency reveals that great god's power.
May Uma's lord‡ be favorable to me 4
and make my tale a source of blessed joy.
Recalling that holy couple, receiving their gift of grace,[42]
I narrate Ram's saga with an eager mind.
By Shiva's blessing, even my speech will shine 5
like night adorned by the moon and stars.
And one who lovingly recites this story,
or listens to it, attentively pondering,
will be enraptured by Ram's feet, 6
untainted by this dark age, and partake of blessing.

* Here, a sacred river, but also a goddess.
† Parvati.
‡ Shiva.

१५ सपनेहुँ साचेहुँ मोहि पर जौं हर गौरि पसाउ।
तौ फुर होउ जो कहेउँ सब भाषा भनिति प्रभाउ॥

१ बंदउँ अवध पुरी अति पावनि।
सरजू सरि कलि कलुष नसावनि॥
प्रनवउँ पुर नर नारि बहोरी।
ममता जिन्ह पर प्रभुहि न थोरी॥
२ सिय निंदक अघ ओघ नसाए।
लोक बिसोक बनाइ बसाए॥
बंदउँ कौसल्या दिसि प्राची।
कीरति जासु सकल जग माची॥
३ प्रगटेउ जहँ रघुपति ससि चारू।
बिस्व सुखद खल कमल तुसारू॥
दसरथ राउ सहित सब रानी।
सुकृत सुमंगल मूरति मानी॥
४ करउँ प्रनाम करम मन बानी।
करहु कृपा सुत सेवक जानी॥
जिन्हहि बिरचि बड़ भयउ बिधाता।
महिमा अवधि राम पितु माता॥

१६ बंदउँ अवध भुआल सत्य प्रेम जेहि राम पद।
बिछुरत दीनदयाल प्रिय तनु तृन इव परिहरेउ॥

If Hara and Gauri really bless me, 15
even for an instant,[43]
everything I say about the power of verse
in common speech will prove true.

I honor the most holy city of Avadh 1
and its river, Sarayu,[44] destroying dark-age sin.
I venerate the city's men and women,
for whom the Lord cherished such affection
that he purged the sins of Sita's slanderers 2
and settled them in his sorrowless world.[45]
I venerate Kausalya—the eastern sky,[46]
whose fame resounds throughout creation—
wherein emerged the moon of Lord Raghu, 3
pleasing the world and freezing the lotuses of sin.
To King Dasarath and all his queens,
considering them embodiments of blessing and merit,
I pay homage in deed, thought, and word. 4
Be gracious, considering me a servant of your son,
you whose creation magnified the creator,
paragons of glory, Ram's father and mother.

I reverence the king of Avadh, who had 16
such true love for Ram's feet
that, parted from the merciful one,
he cast off his body like a wisp of straw.

१ प्रनवउँ परिजन सहित बिदेहू।
जाहि राम पद गूढ़ सनेहू॥
जोग भोग महँ राखेउ गोई।
राम बिलोकत प्रगटेउ सोई॥
२ प्रनवउँ प्रथम भरत के चरना।
जासु नेम ब्रत जाइ न बरना॥
राम चरन पंकज मन जासू।
लुबुध मधुप इव तजइ न पासू॥
३ बंदउँ लछिमन पद जल जाता।
सीतल सुभग भगत सुख दाता॥
रघुपति कीरति बिमल पताका।
दंड समान भयउ जस जाका॥
४ सेष सहस्रसीस जग कारन।
जो अवतरेउ भूमि भय टारन॥
सदा सो सानुकूल रह मो पर।
कृपासिंधु सौमित्रि गुनाकर॥
५ रिपुसूदन पद कमल नमामी।
सूर सुसील भरत अनुगामी॥
महाबीर बिनवउँ हनुमाना।
राम जासु जस आप बखाना॥

१७ प्रनवउँ पवनकुमार खल बन पावक ग्यान घन।
जासु हृदय आगार बसहिं राम सर चाप धर॥

I salute Videha and his kin—King Janak, 1
whose profound love for Ram's feet
was concealed in both austerity and worldliness,
to manifest the moment he beheld Ram.[47]
Among brothers, I first venerate Bharat, 2
whose self-discipline surpasses description,
and whose heart, for the flowers of Ram's feet,
is an ever-hovering, captivated bee.
I salute the feet of Lakshman, water-born lotuses, 3
cool and comforting to the devout.
The stainless banner of Ram's renown
was lofted on the staff of his fame.
Thousand-headed Shesh, world source,[48] 4
who incarnates to lift earth's fears—
may he be ever favorable to me,
ocean of compassion and virtue, Sumitra's son.
I worship the holy feet of Shatrughna, 5
noble warrior and Bharat's faithful follower.
And I pray to the mighty hero Hanuman,
whose fame is eulogized by Ram himself.

I revere the son of the wind, forest fire to the wicked 17
and cloud of wisdom,
in whose heart's mansion Lord Ram resides,
bearing bow and arrows.

१ कपिपति रीछ निसाचर राजा।
अंगदादि जे कीस समाजा॥
बंदउँ सब के चरन सुहाए।
अधम सरीर राम जिन्ह पाए॥
२ रघुपति चरन उपासक जेते।
खग मृग सुर नर असुर समेते॥
बंदउँ पद सरोज सब केरे।
जे बिनु काम राम के चेरे॥
३ सुक सनकादि भगत मुनि नारद।
जे मुनिबर बिग्यान बिसारद॥
प्रनवउँ सबहि धरनि धरि सीसा।
करहु कृपा जन जानि मुनीसा॥
४ जनकसुता जग जननि जानकी।
अतिसय प्रिय करुनानिधान की॥
ताके जुग पद कमल मनावउँ।
जासु कृपाँ निरमल मति पावउँ॥
५ पुनि मन बचन कर्म रघुनायक।
चरन कमल बंदउँ सब लायक॥
राजिवनयन धरें धनु सायक।
भगत बिपति भंजन सुखदायक॥

१८ गिरा अरथ जल बीचि सम कहिअत भिन्न न भिन्न।
बंदउँ सीता राम पद जिन्हहि परम प्रिय खिन्न॥

To the rulers of monkeys, bears, and night-stalkers,[49] 1
to Angad and all the simian legions,
I bow, honoring the lovely feet
of those who in lowly form found Ram.
And all who worship Ram's feet, 2
whether bird, animal, god, man, or demon,
I bow at their holy feet—
all who selflessly serve Ram.
Before Shuk, Sanak, Narad, all devotees, 3
and supremely learned sages and adepts,
I bow, laying my head on the earth.
Great sages, know me as your servant and be gracious.
Janaki—King Janak's daughter, creation's mother, 4
and the compassionate one's dearest beloved—
I worship her two lotus-like feet,
that by her favor I may gain clear insight.
And at last, with my heart, speech, and acts, 5
I adore the most worthy feet of the Raghu king,
that lotus-eyed bearer of bow and arrows,
who shatters the sorrows of his worshipers and gives bliss.

As inseparable as word and meaning, water and wave, 18
though separate in name—
Sita and Ram—I worship their feet,
for whom the afflicted are most dear.

१ बंदउँ नाम राम रघुबर को।
हेतु कृसानु भानु हिमकर को॥
बिधि हरि हरमय बेद प्रान सो।
अगुन अनूपम गुन निधान सो॥
२ महामंत्र जोइ जपत महेसू।
कासीं मुकुति हेतु उपदेसू॥
महिमा जासु जान गनराऊ।
प्रथम पूजिअत नाम प्रभाऊ॥
३ जान आदिकबि नाम प्रतापू।
भयउ सुद्ध करि उलटा जापू॥
सहस नाम सम सुनि सिव बानी।
जपि जेईं पिय संग भवानी॥
४ हरषे हेतु हेरि हर ही को।
किय भूषन तिय भूषन ती को॥
नाम प्रभाउ जान सिव नीको।
कालकूट फलु दीन्ह अमी को॥

१९ बरषा रितु रघुपति भगति तुलसी सालि सुदास।
राम नाम बर बरन जुग सावन भादव मास॥

१ आखर मधुर मनोहर दोऊ।
बरन बिलोचन जन जिय जोऊ॥
सुमिरत सुलभ सुखद सब काहू।
लोक लाहु परलोक निबाहू॥

I reverence *rām,* the great Raghu's name, 1
source of fire, sun, and icy moon,
the Veda's life breath, imbued with the three gods,
attributeless, yet incomparable abode of attributes,
the supreme mantra Shiva constantly repeats, 2
and his teaching, bestowing release in Kashi.[50]
Its glory is well known to Ganesh,
who is worshiped first, by the name's power.
Valmiki, first poet, learned its might, 3
for he became pure saying it backward.[51]
Hearing Shiva declare it equal to a thousand names,
Bhavani repeats it with her beloved.
Pleased by her heart's devotion, Hara 4
made that jewel of wives his own ornament.[52]
Shiva knows well the name's power,
for it turned deathly poison into nectar for him.

Reverence for Ram is the rain, says Tulsi, 19
his servants are the crop,
and the two lovely letters of Ram's name
are the months of Savan and Bhadon.*

Two sweet and lilting syllables,[53] they are 1
the alphabet's eyes and life itself to his people.
Their remembrance gives bliss, is open to all,
and yields profit in this world, salvation beyond.

* Names of months during the monsoon (July–September).

२ कहत सुनत सुमिरत सुठि नीके।
राम लखन सम प्रिय तुलसी के॥
बरनत बरन प्रीति बिलगाती।
ब्रह्म जीव सम सहज सँघाती॥
३ नर नारायन सरिस सुभ्राता।
जग पालक बिसेषि जन त्राता॥
भगति सुतिय कल करन बिभूषन।
जग हित हेतु बिमल बिधु पूषन॥
४ स्वाद तोष सम सुगति सुधा के।
कमठ सेष सम धर बसुधा के॥
जन मन मंजु कंज मधुकर से।
जीह जसोमति हरि हलधर से॥

२० एकु छत्रु एकु मुकुटमनि सब बरननि पर जोउ।
तुलसी रघुबर नाम के बरन बिराजत दोउ॥

१ समुझत सरिस नाम अरु नामी।
प्रीति परसपर प्रभु अनुगामी॥
नाम रूप दुइ ईस उपाधी।
अकथ अनादि सुसामुझि साधी॥
२ को बड़ छोट कहत अपराधू।
सुनि गुन भेदु समुझिहहिं साधू॥
देखिअहिं रूप नाम आधीना।
रूप ग्यान नहिं नाम बिहीना॥

Exceedingly good to utter, hear, or recall, 2
they are as dear to Tulsi as Ram and Lakshman.
To enunciate these syllables severs their loving bond,
yet they are as innately one as God and the soul.
Like Nar and Narayan, these dear brothers 3
maintain creation and specially guard the good.
A pair of sparkling earrings for Lady Devotion,
they are the moon and sun of the world's well-being,
like the savor and satisfaction of heaven's nectar, 4
divine tortoise and serpent upholding the earth,
honeybees on the heart-lotus of the humble,
and Krishna and the plow bearer for the tongue's
Yashoda.[54]

One a parasol, the other a crest-jewel— 20
above all other characters,[55]
Tulsi says, the two letters
of the Raghu lord's name reign supreme.

In understanding, name and named are alike, 1
yet their intimate bond is that of lord and follower.
Name and form are dual attributes of God,
indescribable and eternal, as wisdom discerns.
To call one greater, one lesser, is wrong, 2
yet the holy hear and know their distinct traits.
Clearly, form depends on name,
for it cannot be known in name's absence.

३ रूप बिसेष नाम बिनु जानें।
करतल गत न परहिं पहिचानें॥
सुमिरिअ नाम रूप बिनु देखें।
आवत हृदयँ सनेह बिसेषें॥
४ नाम रूप गति अकथ कहानी।
समुझत सुखद न परति बखानी॥
अगुन सगुन बिच नाम सुसाखी।
उभय प्रबोधक चतुर दुभाषी॥

२१ राम नाम मनिदीप धरु जीह देहरीं द्वार।
तुलसी भीतर बाहेरहुँ जौं चाहसि उजिआर॥

१ नाम जीहँ जपि जागहिं जोगी।
बिरति बिरंचि प्रपंच बियोगी॥
ब्रह्मसुखहि अनुभवहिं अनूपा।
अकथ अनामय नाम न रूपा॥
२ जाना चहहिं गूढ़ गति जेऊ।
नाम जीहँ जपि जानहिं तेऊ॥
साधक नाम जपहिं लय लाएँ।
होहिं सिद्ध अनिमादिक पाएँ॥
३ जपहिं नामु जन आरत भारी।
मिटहिं कुसंकट होहिं सुखारी॥
राम भगत जग चारि प्रकारा।
सुकृती चारिउ अनघ उदारा॥

An object of unknown name remains 3
unrecognized, though held in one's hand.
But recall the name of even an unseen form,
and it enters the heart with distinct feeling.
This untellable tale of name and form 4
delights contemplation but defies description.
Bearing witness between formless and formed,
name is the clever translator who enlightens both.

Set the crystal lamp of Ram's name 21
on the threshold of your tongue,
says Tulsi, if you desire illumination
both within and without.

By repeating the name, yogis awaken, 1
free of desire, from Brahma's fivefold dream,[56]
to experience divine bliss—incomparable,
unutterable, pristine, nameless, and formless.
Those yearning to fathom profound mysteries 2
gain wisdom with the name on their tongues.
Aspirants who ardently utter the name
obtain success and all occult powers,
and when hard-hit folk say the name, 3
their afflictions cease and they become glad.
The world holds four kinds of Ram devotees,
all benevolent, sinless, magnanimous.

४ चहू चतुर कहुँ नाम अधारा।
ग्यानी प्रभुहि बिसेषि पिआरा॥
चहुँ जुग चहुँ श्रुति नाम प्रभाऊ।
कलि बिसेषि नहिं आन उपाऊ॥

२२ सकल कामना हीन जे राम भगति रस लीन।
नाम सुप्रेम पियूष ह्रद तिन्हहुँ किए मन मीन॥

१ अगुन सगुन दुइ ब्रह्म सरूपा।
अकथ अगाध अनादि अनूपा॥
मोरें मत बड़ नामु दुहू तें।
किए जेहिं जुग निज बस निज बूतें॥
२ प्रौढ़ि सुजन जनि जानहिं जन की।
कहउँ प्रतीति प्रीति रुचि मन की॥
एकु दारुगत देखिअ एकू।
पावक सम जुग ब्रह्म बिबेकू॥
३ उभय अगम जुग सुगम नाम तें।
कहेउँ नामु बड़ ब्रह्म राम तें॥
ब्यापकु एकु ब्रह्म अबिनासी।
सत चेतन घन आनँद रासी॥
४ अस प्रभु हृदयँ अछत अबिकारी।
सकल जीव जग दीन दुखारी॥
नाम निरूपन नाम जतन तें।
सोउ प्रगटत जिमि मोल रतन तें॥

These four sorts of adepts depend on his name, 4
yet the truly wise are especially dear to the Lord.
The name's power fills the four aeons and Vedas,
but in the Kali age, there is no other recourse.

Those who are altogether free from desire 22
and rapt in Ram's adoration,
turn their minds into fish
in the love-nectar lake of his name.

God's dual aspects are unqualified and qualified, 1
inexpressible, unfathomable, primal, incomparable.
Yet in my view, the name surpasses both,
for by its innate power, it holds both in sway.
Good people should not think this servant overbold,[57] 2
for I speak from heartfelt personal conviction.
Latent in wood or visibly ignited,
fire is like the dual concepts of *brahma*,[58]
both elusive, yet both accessible by the name. 3
So I declare the name greater than *brahma* or Ram.
Brahma is one, pervasive and indestructible,
a dense mass of consciousness and bliss.
Yet even with this flawless Lord in their hearts, 4
all worldly creatures suffer miserably.
But if they recognize and repeat the name,
that One is revealed, like a gem's true worth.

२३ निरगुन तें एहि भाँति बड़ नाम प्रभाउ अपार।
कहउँ नामु बड़ राम तें निज बिचार अनुसार॥

१ राम भगत हित नर तनु धारी।
सहि संकट किए साधु सुखारी॥
नामु सप्रेम जपत अनयासा।
भगत होहिं मुद मंगल बासा॥
२ राम एक तापस तिय तारी।
नाम कोटि खल कुमति सुधारी॥
रिषि हित राम सुकेतुसुता की।
सहित सेन सुत कीन्हि बिबाकी॥
३ सहित दोष दुख दास दुरासा।
दलइ नामु जिमि रबि निसि नासा॥
भंजेउ राम आपु भव चापू।
भव भय भंजन नाम प्रतापू॥
४ दंडक बनु प्रभु कीन्ह सुहावन।
जन मन अमित नाम किए पावन॥
निसिचर निकर दले रघुनंदन।
नामु सकल कलि कलुष निकंदन॥

२४ सबरी गीध सुसेवकनि सुगति दीन्हि रघुनाथ।
नाम उधारे अमित खल बेद बिदित गुन गाथ॥

And so, attributeless God is surpassed 23
by the name's infinite majesty.
Yet in my own understanding, I call the name
greater even than Ram.

Ram took human form for his followers' sake, 1
and by suffering hardships, pleased the holy.
But, spontaneously repeating his name with love,
devotees become abodes of bliss and blessing.
Lord Ram liberated one ascetic woman,[59] 2
but his name reforms millions of wicked minds.
For a seer's sake, Ram slew Suketu's daughter,[60]
with her minions and son.
But along with sin and sorrow, a devotee's despair 3
is destroyed by the name as night by the sun.
Ram himself broke Bhava's bow,
but the power of his name crushes rebirth's dread.[61]
The Lord tamed the Dandak wilderness, 4
but his name has purified countless hearts.
The Raghu prince slew an army of night-stalkers,
but his name uproots every sin of this dark age.

The good servants Shabari and Jatayu were given salvation 24
by the Raghu lord,
but his name has liberated countless sinners,
as is famously sung in the Veda.

१ राम सुकंठ बिभीषन दोऊ।
राखे सरन जान सबु कोऊ॥
नाम गरीब अनेक नेवाजे।
लोक बेद बर बिरिद बिराजे॥

२ राम भालु कपि कटकु बटोरा।
सेतु हेतु श्रमु कीन्ह न थोरा॥
नामु लेत भवसिंधु सुखाहीं।
करहु बिचारु सुजन मन माहीं॥

३ राम सकुल रन रावनु मारा।
सीय सहित निज पुर पगु धारा॥
राजा रामु अवध रजधानी।
गावत गुन सुर मुनि बर बानी॥

४ सेवक सुमिरत नामु सप्रीती।
बिनु श्रम प्रबल मोह दलु जीती॥
फिरत सनेहँ मगन सुख अपनें।
नाम प्रसाद सोच नहिं सपनें॥

२५ ब्रह्म राम तें नामु बड़ बर दायक बर दानि।
रामचरित सत कोटि महँ लिय महेस जियँ जानि॥

१ नाम प्रसाद संभु अबिनासी।
साजु अमंगल मंगल रासी॥
सुक सनकादि सिद्ध मुनि जोगी।
नाम प्रसाद ब्रह्मसुख भोगी॥

To two princes, Sugriv and Vibhishan, Ram 1
gave asylum, as everyone knows,
but his name comforts countless paupers,
and is famed in all scripture and lore.
Ram assembled an army of monkeys and bears 2
and labored long to cross the sea,
but just saying his name dries up the ocean of rebirth.
Ponder this in your hearts, good people!
Ram killed Ravan and his clan in battle 3
and returned with Sita to his city.
Ram became king, Avadh his capital,
and gods and sages sing their praises.
But his servants, just recalling his name 4
with love, easily rout delusion's legions
and turn inward with blissful absorption,
ever free of care, by the name's grace.

Surpassing both *brahma* and Ram, the name 25
grants boons even to boon givers.
And so, from among Ram's thousand million exploits,
Shiva wisely selected it.[62]

By the name's grace, Shambhu is indestructible 1
and, though in auspicious guise, a treasury of
auspiciousness.
Shukdev, Sanak, other sages and adepts
enjoy divine bliss thanks only to the name.

२ नारद जानेउ नाम प्रतापू।
जग प्रिय हरि हरि हर प्रिय आपू॥
नामु जपत प्रभु कीन्ह प्रसादू।
भगत सिरोमनि भे प्रहलादू॥
३ ध्रुवँ सगलानि जपेउ हरि नाऊँ।
पायउ अचल अनूपम ठाऊँ॥
सुमिरि पवनसुत पावन नामू।
अपने बस करि राखे रामू॥
४ अपतु अजामिलु गजु गनिकाऊ।
भए मुकुत हरि नाम प्रभाऊ॥
कहौं कहाँ लगि नाम बड़ाई।
रामु न सकहिं नाम गुन गाई॥

२६ नामु राम को कलपतरु कलि कल्यान निवासु।
जो सुमिरत भयो भाँग तें तुलसी तुलसीदासु॥

१ चहुँ जुग तीनि काल तिहुँ लोका।
भए नाम जपि जीव बिसोका॥
बेद पुरान संत मत एहू।
सकल सुकृत फल राम सनेहू॥
२ ध्यानु प्रथम जुग मख बिधि दूजें।
द्वापर परितोषत प्रभु पूजें॥
कलि केवल मल मूल मलीना।
पाप पयोनिधि जन मन मीना॥

Narad knew the name's power, and that is why Hari, 2
whom the world loves, and Hara, too, love him.
Repetition of the name pleased the Lord
and made Prahlad crown jewel of devotees.
Dhruv repeated Hari's name in despair, 3
and gained a matchless, unshakable state.[63]
Hanuman, the wind's son, by the holy name,
brought Ram himself under his sway.
Vile Ajamil, and the elephant and whore[64] 4
were liberated by the power of Hari's name.
But how long shall I expound the name's glory,
when Ram himself cannot sing its virtues?

Ram's name is a wish-granting tree 26
and an abode of blessing in this dark age.
Recalling it, Tulsidas was transformed from mere hemp
into tulsi, purest of herbs.[65]

In all four ages, three times, and triple worlds, 1
beings are freed of sorrow by repeating the name.
Thus Veda, *purāṇas,* and saints assert—
the fruit of all good works is love for Ram.
By meditation in the first age, sacrifice in the second, 2
and worship in the third, the Lord was pleased.
But the Kali age is nothing but a fount of filth,
an ocean of sin, in which people's minds are fish.

३ नाम कामतरु काल कराला।
सुमिरत समन सकल जग जाला॥
राम नाम कलि अभिमत दाता।
हित परलोक लोक पितु माता॥
४ नहिं कलि करम न भगति बिबेकू।
राम नाम अवलंबन एकू॥
कालनेमि कलि कपट निधानू।
नाम सुमति समरथ हनुमानू॥

२७ राम नाम नरकेसरी कनककसिपु कलिकाल।
जापक जन प्रहलाद जिमि पालिहि दलि सुरसाल॥

१ भायँ कुभायँ अनख आलसहूँ।
नाम जपत मंगल दिसि दसहूँ॥
सुमिरि सो नाम राम गुन गाथा।
करउँ नाइ रघुनाथहि माथा॥
२ मोरि सुधारिहि सो सब भाँती।
जासु कृपा नहिं कृपाँ अघाती॥
राम सुस्वामि कुसेवकु मोसो।
निज दिसि देखि दयानिधि पोसो॥
३ लोकहुँ बेद सुसाहिब रीती।
बिनय सुनत पहिचानत प्रीती॥
गनी गरीब ग्राम नर नागर।
पंडित मूढ़ मलीन उजागर॥

The name is the wishing tree of this awful time, 3
its mere remembrance rips the world's snares.
In the dark age, Ram's name grants every wish,
giving salvation in the next world, parental succor in
this.[66]
The Kali has no good deeds, devotion, or discernment, 4
and the name of Ram is our sole support.
Like Kalnemi, Kali is a mass of duplicity,
but the name is a quick-witted and able Hanuman.[67]

To the gold-clad demon of the dark age, 27
Ram's name is a man-lion,[68]
slaying the gods' foes and protecting those,
like Prahlad, who repeat it.

With good or bad motives, in a rage or listlessly, 1
repeating the name blesses all ten directions.
Recalling that name, I will sing the saga
of Ram's virtues, bowing my head before Lord Raghu.
May he correct my every shortcoming— 2
the merciful one, whose mercy is never sated.
A good master like Ram and a poor servant like me!
Yet true to his nature, that gracious one nurtures me.
Common sense and Veda know a good master's ways— 3
hearing a humble petition, he recognizes love.
Rich and poor, rustic and urbane,
scholars, fools, scoundrels, and luminaries,

४ सुकबि कुकबि निज मति अनुहारी।
नृपहि सराहत सब नर नारी॥
साधु सुजान सुसील नृपाला।
ईस अंस भव परम कृपाला॥

५ सुनि सनमानहिं सबहि सुबानी।
भनिति भगति नति गति पहिचानी॥
यह प्राकृत महिपाल सुभाऊ।
जान सिरोमनि कोसलराऊ॥

६ रीझत राम सनेह निसोतें।
को जग मंद मलिनमति मोतें॥

२८क सठ सेवक की प्रीति रुचि रखिहहिं राम कृपालु।
उपल किए जलजान जेहिं सचिव सुमति कपि भालु॥

२८ख हौंहु कहावत सबु कहत राम सहत उपहास।
साहिब सीतानाथ सो सेवक तुलसीदास॥

१ अति बड़ि मोरि ढिठाई खोरी।
सुनि अघ नरकहुँ नाक सकोरी॥
समुझि सहम मोहि अपडर अपनें।
सो सुधि राम कीन्हि नहिं सपनें॥

good and bad poets, according to their wit— 4
all men and women voice praise for a king.
And a wise and virtuous lord of men,
born of a portion of God,[69] supremely benevolent,
hears and eloquently acknowledges them all, 5
discerning their devotion and humility.
Such is the nature of even earthly kings,
and the king of Kosala is wisdom's diadem!
Ram is pleased by the pure flow of love, 6
but who in the world has a dimmer, dirtier mind than I?

Yet even a vile servant's affection and intent 28a
will be cherished by kindly Ram,
who made a ferry of rocks, and wise counselors
of monkeys and bears.

I go along with what everyone says about me, 28b
and Ram suffers the mockery—
that a master like Sita's Lord should have
a servant like Tulsidas!

So great is my temerity and sin, 1
that hell, hearing of it, wrinkled its nose in disdain.
Knowing this frightens me, but needlessly,
for Ram has never given it a thought.

२ सुनि अवलोकि सुचित चख चाही।
भगति मोरि मति स्वामि सराही॥
कहत नसाइ होइ हियँ नीकी।
रीझत राम जानि जन जी की॥
३ रहति न प्रभु चित चूक किए की।
करत सुरति सय बार हिए की॥
जेहिं अघ बधेउ ब्याध जिमि बाली।
फिरि सुकंठ सोइ कीन्हि कुचाली॥
४ सोइ करतूति बिभीषन केरी।
सपनेहुँ सो न राम हियँ हेरी॥
ते भरतहि भेंटत सनमाने।
राजसभाँ रघुबीर बखाने॥

२९क प्रभु तरु तर कपि डार पर ते किए आपु समान।
तुलसी कहूँ न राम से साहिब सीलनिधान॥

२९ख राम निकाईं रावरी है सबही को नीक।
जौं यह साँची है सदा तौ नीको तुलसीक॥

२९ग एहि बिधि निज गुन दोष कहि सबहि बहुरि सिरु
नाइ।
बरनउँ रघुबर बिसद जसु सुनि कलि कलुष नसाइ॥

Having heard, seen, and calmly considered it all, 2
my Lord extols my devotion and wit.
Speech may be faulty, but if the heart is good,
Ram, knowing his servant's soul, is satisfied.
The Lord does not dwell on misdeeds 3
but recalls an act of love a hundred times.
The crime for which he hunted down Vali—
that same sin was then committed by Sugriv,
and Vibhishan, too, did that very deed,[70] 4
yet Ram did not even glance at it.
Instead, the Raghu hero honored them before Bharat
and praised them in his royal assembly.

The Lord beneath a tree, frisky monkeys in its boughs— 29a
yet he made them equal to himself!
Nowhere, Tulsi says, is there a master like Ram,
the paragon of nobility.

Oh Ram, your goodness is good 29b
for one and all,
and, if this is forever true,
then it must be good for Tulsi, too!

With this account of my merits and flaws, 29c
I bow once more to all,
and tell the tale of Ram's spotless glory,
for hearing it purges dark-age sins.

१ जागबलिक जो कथा सुहाई।
भरद्वाज मुनिबरहि सुनाई॥
कहिहउँ सोइ संबाद बखानी।
सुनहुँ सकल सज्जन सुखु मानी॥
२ संभु कीन्ह यह चरित सुहावा।
बहुरि कृपा करि उमहि सुनावा॥
सोइ सिव कागभुसुंडिहि दीन्हा।
राम भगत अधिकारी चीन्हा॥
३ तेहि सन जागबलिक पुनि पावा।
तिन्ह पुनि भरद्वाज प्रति गावा॥
ते श्रोता बकता समसीला।
सवँदरसी जानहिं हरिलीला॥
४ जानहिं तीनि काल निज ग्याना।
करतल गत आमलक समाना॥
औरउ जे हरिभगत सुजाना।
कहहिं सुनहिं समुझहिं बिधि नाना॥

३०क मैं पुनि निज गुर सन सुनी कथा सो सूकरखेत।
समुझी नहिं तसि बालपन तब अति रहेउँ अचेत॥

३०ख श्रोता बकता ग्याननिधि कथा राम कै गूढ़।
किमि समुझौं मैं जीव जड़ कलि मल ग्रसित बिमूढ़॥

The lovely tale that sage Yajnavalkya[71] 1
recounted to the great ascetic Bharadvaj,
that dialogue[72] I will relate in detail—
let all good people listen joyfully.
Shiva crafted this beautiful saga, 2
then in his grace told it to Uma.
He also gave it to Bhushundi the crow,[73]
recognizing a deserving devotee of Ram.
From him, Yajnavalkya obtained it, 3
and he sang it to Bharadvaj.
These listeners and tellers are equally worthy,
all-seeing knowers of Hari's cosmic play.
Their insight surveys past, present, and future, 4
like a little fruit held in the palm of the hand.[74]
And other wise worshipers of the Lord
tell, hear, and ponder the tale in diverse ways.

In time, I myself heard that very story 30a
from my guru, at Sukarkhet,[75]
yet I did not understand it,
being but a child and quite unaware.

Both hearer and teller should be treasuries of wisdom, 30b
for Ram's tale is mysterious.
How could I comprehend it, a foolish soul
in the grip of the dark age's sins?

१ तदपि कही गुर बारहिं बारा।
समुझि परी कछु मति अनुसारा॥
भाषाबद्ध करबि मैं सोई।
मोरें मन प्रबोध जेहिं होई॥
२ जस कछु बुधि बिबेक बल मेरें।
तस कहिहउँ हियँ हरि के प्रेरें॥
निज संदेह मोह भ्रम हरनी।
करउँ कथा भव सरिता तरनी॥
३ बुध बिश्राम सकल जन रंजनि।
रामकथा कलि कलुष बिभंजनि॥
रामकथा कलि पंनग भरनी।
पुनि बिबेक पावक कहुँ अरनी॥
४ रामकथा कलि कामद गाई।
सुजन सजीवनि मूरि सुहाई॥
सोइ बसुधातल सुधा तरंगिनि।
भय भंजनि भ्रम भेक भुअंगिनि॥
५ असुर सेन सम नरक निकंदिनि।
साधु बिबुध कुल हित गिरिनंदिनि॥
संत समाज पयोधि रमा सी।
बिस्व भार भर अचल छमा सी॥
६ जम गन मुहँ मसि जग जमुना सी।
जीवन मुकुति हेतु जनु कासी॥
रामहि प्रिय पावनि तुलसी सी।
तुलसिदास हित हियँ हुलसी सी॥

But then my teacher told it time and again, 1
and I grasped some of it, to the limit of my understanding.
That same tale I will set in common speech,
that it may awaken my heart.
By the strength of such wit and discrimination as I own, 2
I will narrate it, inwardly inspired by the Lord.
I compose the tale that dispels my own doubt, ignorance,
and error, and ferries across the river of rebirth.
Comfort to the wise, pleasing to all people, 3
Ram's story erases the impurity of the Kali age.
His tale is a spell against the era's serpent,
and kindling to spark pure discrimination.[76]
In the Kali age, Ram's tale is the cow of plenty 4
and the herb of immortality for virtuous folk.
A stream of nectar on earth, destroying
fear, devouring, like a snake, the frogs of error.
For annihilating the hell of demon hordes 5
and rescuing the gods of pious people, it is Durga,
and Lakshmi, born from the sea of the saints' assembly.
It is like all-bearing and steady mother earth,
Yamuna to blacken the faces of death's minions,[77] 6
and Kashi for the liberation of souls.
Beloved to Ram as holy tulsi, and
like the heartfelt joy that sustains Tulsidas,[78]

७ सिवप्रिय मेकल सैल सुता सी।
सकल सिद्धि सुख संपति रासी॥
सदगुन सुरगन अंब अदिति सी।
रघुबर भगति प्रेम परमिति सी॥

३१ रामकथा मंदाकिनी चित्रकूट चित चारु।
तुलसी सुभग सनेह बन सिय रघुबीर बिहारु॥

१ रामचरित चिंतामनि चारू।
संत सुमति तिय सुभग सिंगारू॥
जग मंगल गुनग्राम राम के।
दानि मुकुति धन धरम धाम के॥
२ सदगुर ग्यान बिराग जोग के।
बिबुध बैद भव भीम रोग के॥
जननि जनक सिय राम प्रेम के।
बीज सकल ब्रत धरम नेम के॥
३ समन पाप संताप सोक के।
प्रिय पालक परलोक लोक के॥
सचिव सुभट भूपति बिचार के।
कुंभज लोभ उदधि अपार के॥
४ काम कोह कलिमल करिगन के।
केहरि सावक जन मन बन के॥
अतिथि पूज्य प्रियतम पुरारि के।
कामद घन दारिद दवारि के॥

it is as dear to Shiva as the river Narmada, 7
storehouse of occult powers and earthly abundance.
Like Mother Aditi to the gods of goodness,[79]
and the epitome of love and devotion for Ram.

Ram's tale is the river Mandakini; a clear mind, 31
Mount Chitrakut; and pure love,
Tulsi says, is the forest where Sita
and the Raghu hero dwell in delight.[80]

Ram's deeds are a wish-granting gem 1
adorning the woman who is saints' wisdom.
For the world's good, Ram's multitude of merits
bestow release, abundance, virtue, and salvation.
They are preceptors of wisdom, detachment, and yoga, 2
divine physicians for the world's dreadful ills,
parents of pure love for Sita and Ram,
and seeds of all austerity, dharma, and spiritual practice.
They suppress sin and suffering 3
and tenderly nurture this world and the next.
Ministers and champions of King Contemplation,
an Agastya to gulp greed's boundless sea,[81]
and to the elephant herd of lust, rage, and sin, 4
a young lion in the forest of good people's hearts,
a guest whom Shiva loves and honors,
a bounteous rain cloud for the wildfire of poverty,

५ मंत्र महामनि बिषय ब्याल के ।
मेटत कठिन कुअंक भाल के ॥
हरन मोह तम दिनकर कर से ।
सेवक सालि पाल जलधर से ॥

६ अभिमत दानि देवतरु बर से ।
सेवत सुलभ सुखद हरि हर से ॥
सुकबि सरद नभ मन उडगन से ।
रामभगत जन जीवन धन से ॥

७ सकल सुकृत फल भूरि भोग से ।
जग हित निरुपधि साधु लोग से ॥
सेवक मन मानस मराल से ।
पावन गंग तरंग माल से ॥

३२क कुपथ कुतरक कुचालि कलि कपट दंभ पाषंड ।
दहन राम गुन ग्राम जिमि इंधन अनल प्रचंड ॥

३२ख रामचरित राकेस कर सरिस सुखद सब काहु ।
सज्जन कुमुद चकोर चित हित बिसेषि बड़ लाहु ॥

१ कीन्हि प्रस्न जेहि भाँति भवानी ।
जेहि बिधि संकर कहा बखानी ॥
सो सब हेतु कहब मैं गाई ।
कथा प्रबंध बिचित्र बनाई ॥

healing mantra and gem for the snakebite of sensuality, 5
and effacer of ill fate from the forehead.
Like sunbeams to dispel delusion's darkness,
like rain clouds saving the rice crop of devotees,
like the wish-granting tree of the gods, 6
or the easy fulfillment of worshiping Hari and Hara,
like stars in the rain-washed sky of poets' minds,
and the life and sustenance of Ram's devotees,
like enjoyment of the fruit of all good works, 7
and the selfless service of saints,
like *haṃsa* birds on the high lake of worshipful hearts,
and Ganga's garland of sanctifying waves.

The false paths, doctrines, and deeds of the dark age, 32a
its deceit, arrogance, and heresy,
are consumed like dry tinder in the mighty blaze
of Ram's innumerable virtues.

Like the rays of the full moon, the deeds of Ram 32b
are delightful to all,
but give special sustenance to the lilies
and *cakor* birds of pious hearts.[82]

How Bhavani posed her question, 1
and how Lord Shankar expounded in reply—
that entire episode I will sing,
composing an extraordinary tale.

२ जेहिं यह कथा सुनी नहिं होई।
जनि आचरजु करै सुनि सोई॥
कथा अलौकिक सुनहिं जे ग्यानी।
नहिं आचरजु करहिं अस जानी॥
३ रामकथा कै मिति जग नाहीं।
असि प्रतीति तिन्ह के मन माहीं॥
नाना भाँति राम अवतारा।
रामायन सत कोटि अपारा॥
४ कलपभेद हरिचरित सुहाए।
भाँति अनेक मुनीसन्ह गाए॥
करिअ न संसय अस उर आनी।
सुनिअ कथा सादर रति मानी॥

३३ राम अनंत अनंत गुन अमित कथा बिस्तार।
सुनि आचरजु न मानिहहिं जिन्ह कें बिमल बिचार॥

१ एहि बिधि सब संसय करि दूरी।
सिर धरि गुर पद पंकज धूरी॥
पुनि सबही बिनवउँ कर जोरी।
करत कथा जेहिं लाग न खोरी॥
२ सादर सिवहि नाइ अब माथा।
बरनउँ बिसद राम गुन गाथा॥
संबत सोरह सै एकतीसा।
करउँ कथा हरि पद धरि सीसा॥

One who has not heard this story before 2
should not be surprised when hearing it now.[83]
Wise ones who hear this transcendent tale
are not perplexed, for they understand
that Ram's story has no limit in this world, 3
and this faith abides in their hearts.
Ram has incarnated in countless ways
and there are billions of boundless Ramayanas!
In various aeons, the Lord's glorious deeds 4
have been sung in diverse ways by sages.
Reflect on this and do not doubt,
but listen to the tale with reverence and love.

Ram is infinite, infinite his virtues, 33
and their epic narration limitless.
Hearing this tale, those of untarnished discernment
will not be bewildered.

So, having set aside all doubts, and placing 1
the lotus-pollen of my master's feet on my brow,
I again reverently petition one and all,
that no flaw be imputed to my telling.
Now bowing in homage to Lord Shiva, 2
I narrate the spotless saga of Ram's virtues.
In this year sixteen hundred thirty-one,
laying my head at Hari's feet, I compose my tale;

३ नौमी भौम बार मधुमासा।
अवधपुरीं यह चरित प्रकासा॥
जेहि दिन राम जनम श्रुति गावहिं।
तीरथ सकल तहाँ चलि आवहिं॥
४ असुर नाग खग नर मुनि देवा।
आइ करहिं रघुनायक सेवा॥
जन्म महोत्सव रचहिं सुजाना।
करहिं राम कल कीरति गाना॥

३४ मज्जहिं सज्जन बृंद बहु पावन सरजू नीर।
जपहिं राम धरि ध्यान उर सुंदर स्याम सरीर॥

१ दरस परस मज्जन अरु पाना।
हरइ पाप कह बेद पुराना॥
नदी पुनीत अमित महिमा अति।
कहि न सकइ सारदा बिमल मति॥
२ राम धामदा पुरी सुहावनि।
लोक समस्त बिदित अति पावनि॥
चारि खानि जग जीव अपारा।
अवध तजें तनु नहिं संसारा॥
३ सब बिधि पुरी मनोहर जानी।
सकल सिद्धिप्रद मंगल खानी॥
बिमल कथा कर कीन्ह अरंभा।
सुनत नसाहिं काम मद दंभा॥

on Tuesday, the ninth of spring's gentle month, 3
in the city of Avadh, this account is revealed.[84]
On the day of Ram's birth, so the Veda declares,
all holy places make pilgrimage here.
Demons, snakes, birds, humans, sages, and gods, 4
all come to worship the Lord of the Raghus.
Wise ones celebrate the birthday festivities
and sing of Ram's beautiful renown.

In many assemblies, good folk bathe 34
in the Sarayu's holy waters,
and repeat Ram's name, inwardly contemplating
his beautiful dark form.

Just to see, touch, bathe in, or drink 1
the water removes sin, so scripture declares.
The endless renown of this sacred river,
even pure-minded Sharada cannot express.
This lovely city, gateway to Ram's own realm, 2
is famed for its sanctity in all worlds,
for the four kinds of beings in creation,
if they shed their bodies in Avadh, escape rebirth.[85]
Knowing this city to be altogether beautiful 3
and beneficent, bestowing all spiritual powers,
I begin my tale here, that its hearing
may destroy lust, arrogance, and pride.

४ रामचरितमानस एहि नामा।
सुनत श्रवन पाइअ बिश्रामा॥
मन करि बिषय अनल बन जरई।
होइ सुखी जौं एहिं सर परई॥
५ रामचरितमानस मुनि भावन।
बिरचेउ संभु सुहावन पावन॥
त्रिबिध दोष दुख दारिद दावन।
कलि कुचालि कुलि कलुष नसावन॥
६ रचि महेस निज मानस राखा।
पाइ सुसमउ सिवा सन भाषा॥
तातें रामचरितमानस बर।
धरेउ नाम हियँ हेरि हरषि हर॥
७ कहउँ कथा सोइ सुखद सुहाई।
सादर सुनहु सुजन मन लाई॥

३५ जस मानस जेहि बिधि भयउ जग प्रचार जेहि हेतु।
अब सोइ कहउँ प्रसंग सब सुमिरि उमा बृषकेतु॥

१ संभु प्रसाद सुमति हियँ हुलसी।
रामचरितमानस कबि तुलसी॥
करइ मनोहर मति अनुहारी।
सुजन सुचित सुनि लेहु सुधारी॥
२ सुमति भूमि थल हृदय अगाधू।
बेद पुरान उदधि घन साधू॥

Its name is *Rāmcaritmānas,* Sacred Lake of Ram's Deeds, 4
and just hearing this soothes the ears.
The mind's elephant, in the burning forest of desire,
becomes tranquil if it plunges into this lake.
This *Rāmcaritmānas* is a delight to sages 5
for it is Shiva's own lovely, sanctified composition,
which suppresses the three kinds of sin, sorrow, and want,
and annihilates the evil and filth of this age.
The great god fashioned it and kept it in his mind[86] 6
till at a suitable time, he told it to Parvati.
For this reason, Shiva gave it the noble name
Rāmcaritmānas, after joyfully searching his heart.
I shall retell that same delightful story— 7
listen, good folk, with reverent attention.

What the *Mānas* is, how it came to be, and the cause 35
of its revelation on earth—
all this I will now relate, recalling Uma
and her bull-bannered lord.*

By Shiva's grace, wisdom blossomed in the heart 1
of Tulsi, and he became the poet of *Rāmcaritmānas.*
He has made it enthralling, to the best of his wit,
but wise listeners may yet improve it.
In the ground of wisdom lies the heart's deep place. 2
Sacred lore is an ocean, and the saints are clouds,

* Shiva.

बरषहिं राम सुजस बर बारी।
मधुर मनोहर मंगलकारी॥
३ लीला सगुन जो कहहिं बखानी।
सोइ स्वच्छता करइ मल हानी॥
प्रेम भगति जो बरनि न जाई।
सोइ मधुरता सुसीतलताई॥
४ सो जल सुकृत सालि हित होई।
राम भगत जन जीवन सोई॥
मेधा महि गत सो जल पावन।
सकिलि श्रवन मग चलेउ सुहावन॥
५ भरेउ सुमानस सुथल थिराना।
सुखद सीत रुचि चारु चिराना॥

३६ सुठि सुंदर संबाद बर बिरचे बुद्धि बिचारि।
तेइ एहि पावन सुभग सर घाट मनोहर चारि॥

१ सप्त प्रबंध सुभग सोपाना।
ग्यान नयन निरखत मन माना॥
रघुपति महिमा अगुन अबाधा।
बरनब सोइ बर बारि अगाधा॥
२ राम सीय जस सलिल सुधासम।
उपमा बीचि बिलास मनोरम॥
पुरइनि सघन चारु चौपाई।
जुगुति मंजु मनि सीप सुहाई॥

who shower down the pure water of Ram's fame,
sweet, refreshing, and auspicious.
Their recounting of his embodied pastimes 3
is its clarity, washing away sin's taint.
Love and devotion, beyond description,
are its sweet flavor and coolness.
That water nurtures the rice crop of good deeds, 4
and is the very life of Ram's devotees.
Entering the soil of understanding, that sacred water
collects, through the channels of the ears,
to fill the deep and tranquil lake of the heart— 5
delightful and cool, enchanting and ancient.

The beautiful dialogues, elegantly crafted 36
through wise contemplation,
comprise the four inviting landings[87]
of this sacred, lovely reservoir.

The seven books are its stairs,[88] 1
which, seen by wisdom's eye, please the heart.
Lord Raghu's fame is transcendent and limitless—
its narration is the water's profound depth.
The glory of Ram and Sita makes it nectar-like, 2
sparkling with the wave-play of similes.
Caupāī verses are its dense lily pads,
its poetic devices, pearl-bearing oysters,

३ छंद सोरठा सुंदर दोहा।
सोइ बहुरंग कमल कुल सोहा॥
अरथ अनूप सुभाव सुभासा।
सोइ पराग मकरंद सुबासा॥
४ सुकृत पुंज मंजुल अलि माला।
ग्यान बिराग बिचार मराला॥
धुनि अवरेब कबित गुन जाती।
मीन मनोहर ते बहुभाँती॥
५ अरथ धरम कामादिक चारी।
कहब ग्यान बिग्यान बिचारी॥
नव रस जप तप जोग बिरागा।
ते सब जलचर चारु तड़ागा॥
६ सुकृती साधु नाम गुन गाना।
ते बिचित्र जलबिहग समाना॥
संतसभा चहुँ दिसि अवँराई।
श्रद्धा रितु बसंत सम गाई॥
७ भगति निरूपन बिबिध बिधाना।
छमा दया दम लता बिताना॥
सम जम नियम फूल फल ग्याना।
हरि पद रति रस बेद बखाना॥
८ औरउ कथा अनेक प्रसंगा।
तेइ सुक पिक बहुबरन बिहंगा॥

and its lovely lyric verses and couplets, 3
a multitude of many-colored lotuses.
Matchless meaning, mood, and eloquence
are their pollen, nectar, and fragrance.
Right actions are lines of honeybees, 4
and wisdom, detachment, and discrimination are *haṃsa*
birds.
Allusion, ambiguity, and varying verse forms
are many kinds of charming fish.
The four aims—success, virtue, pleasure, and release— 5
expounded with knowledge and wisdom,
the nine poetic moods,[89] and the spiritual disciplines
all are water creatures, living in this lovely lake.
Praise of the upright, the holy, and the divine name 6
are like colorful waterfowl.
The assembly of saints is a mango grove on all sides,
and their faith is likened to the season of spring.
Diverse explanations of devotion, forgiveness, 7
compassion, and self-control are a canopy of vines.[90]
Restraint and discipline are flowers, yielding fruits of
wisdom,
whose nectar is love for Hari's feet, as the Veda declares.
And the many supplemental stories here 8
are multicolored parrots and cuckoos.

३७ पुलक बाटिका बाग बन सुख सुबिहंग बिहारु।
माली सुमन सनेह जल सींचत लोचन चारु॥

१ जे गावहिं यह चरित सँभारे।
तेइ एहि ताल चतुर रखवारे॥
सदा सुनहिं सादर नर नारी।
तेइ सुरबर मानस अधिकारी॥
२ अति खल जे बिषई बग कागा।
एहि सर निकट न जाहिं अभागा॥
संबुक भेक सेवार समाना।
इहाँ न बिषय कथा रस नाना॥
३ तेहि कारन आवत हियँ हारे।
कामी काक बलाक बिचारे॥
आवत एहिं सर अति कठिनाई।
राम कृपा बिनु आइ न जाई॥
४ कठिन कुसंग कुपंथ कराला।
तिन्ह के बचन बाघ हरि ब्याला॥
गृह कारज नाना जंजाला।
ते अति दुर्गम सैल बिसाला॥
५ बन बहु बिषम मोह मद माना।
नदीं कुतर्क भयंकर नाना॥

These gardens and groves of ecstasy, 37
where birds of happiness sport,
are watered by tears of love
from the eyes of the heart's gardener.

Those who attentively sing this narrative 1
are the skilled guardians of this lake.
Men and women, ever listening with reverence,
are fortunate gods, initiates to this Manas.
The sinful and sensuous are herons and crows, 2
luckless ones who cannot approach this lake,
for, like slugs, frogs, and pond scum,
the savors of myriad racy tales are absent here.
For this reason, they give up coming, 3
those poor lustful crows and cranes.[91]
Great hardships bar the approach to this lake,
and no one comes but by Ram's grace.
Bad companions are menacing detours, 4
and their words are tigers, lions, and snakes.
The countless entanglements of household life
are impassible mountain ranges,
with frightful forests of delusion and pride 5
and endless raging rivers of false logic.

३८ जे श्रद्धा संबल रहित नहिं संतन्ह कर साथ।
तिन्ह कहुँ मानस अगम अति जिन्हहि न प्रिय
रघुनाथ॥

१ जौं करि कष्ट जाइ पुनि कोई।
जातहिं नीद जुड़ाई होई॥
जड़ता जाड़ बिषम उर लागा।
गएहुँ न मज्जन पाव अभागा॥
२ करि न जाइ सर मज्जन पाना।
फिरि आवइ समेत अभिमाना॥
जौं बहोरि कोउ पूछन आवा।
सर निंदा करि ताहि बुझावा॥
३ सकल बिघ्न ब्यापहिं नहिं तेही।
राम सुकृपाँ बिलोकहिं जेही॥
सोइ सादर सर मज्जनु करई।
महा घोर त्रयताप न जरई॥
४ ते नर यह सर तजहिं न काऊ।
जिन्ह कें राम चरन भल भाऊ॥
जो नहाइ चह एहिं सर भाई।
सो सतसंग करउ मन लाई॥
५ अस मानस मानस चख चाही।
भइ कबि बुद्धि बिमल अवगाही॥
भयउ हृदयँ आनंद उछाहू।
उमगेउ प्रेम प्रमोद प्रबाहू॥

For one lacking the journey-fare of faith, 38
the company of holy ones,
and love for the Raghu Lord,
the Manas lake is truly inaccessible.

If, after great hardship, one does arrive, 1
travel fatigue induces fevered sleep,
the bitter cold of inertia seizes the heart,
and the poor wretch is unable to bathe.
Without a dip, without sipping the water, 2
such a one goes back, full of arrogance,
and if anyone comes to inquire,
discourages them, belittling the lake.
Yet all these obstacles do not hinder one 3
whom Ram has looked upon with grace.
That one reverently bathes in the water
and extinguishes the three terrible fires.[92]
Such a one will never forsake this lake— 4
one who has deep reverence for Ram's feet.
Brother, if you yearn to bathe in these waters,
steadfastly keep the company of the holy.
Seeking out that Manas with inner eye, 5
plunging in it, a poet's mind is cleansed,
his heart is blissfully inspired,
and a delightful spring of love wells up,

६ चली सुभग कबिता सरिता सो।
राम बिमल जस जल भरिता सो॥
सरजू नाम सुमंगल मूला।
लोक बेद मत मंजुल कूला॥
७ नदी पुनीत सुमानस नंदिनि।
कलिमल तृन तरु मूल निकंदिनि॥

३९ श्रोता त्रिबिध समाज पुर ग्राम नगर दुहुँ कूल।
संतसभा अनुपम अवध सकल सुमंगल मूल॥

१ रामभगति सुरसरितहि जाई।
मिली सुकीरति सरजु सुहाई॥
सानुज राम समर जसु पावन।
मिलेउ महानदु सोन सुहावन॥
२ जुग बिच भगति देवधुनि धारा।
सोहति सहित सुबिरति बिचारा॥
त्रिबिध ताप त्रासक तिमुहानी।
राम सरूप सिंधु समुहानी॥
३ मानस मूल मिली सुरसरिही।
सुनत सुजन मन पावन करिही॥
बिच बिच कथा बिचित्र बिभागा।
जनु सरि तीर तीर बन बागा॥
४ उमा महेस बिबाह बराती।
ते जलचर अगनित बहुभाँती॥

to flow as the blessed river of poetry, 6
filled with the water of Ram's pure fame.
Its name is Sarayu, root of blessedness,
and Vedic and worldly wisdom are its charming banks.
This holy river, daughter of Lake Manas, 7
uproots the trees and weeds of this dark age.

The three kinds of audience[93] are villages, towns, 39
and cities on both shores,
and the assembly of saints is incomparable Avadh,
source of all beneficence.

Flowing into the Ganga of devotion to Ram, 1
the Sarayu of his splendor merges,
and the battle fame of Ram and Lakshman
joins it as the mighty river Son.[94]
Between them, divine Ganga's stream of devotion 2
sparkles with detachment and discernment.
A triple current to frighten the triple fires,
the river surges toward the sea of Ram's reality.
Arising from the Manas, merging with Ganga, 3
it purifies the hearts of good people who listen.
Diverse and colorful tales interspersed here
are like groves and gardens on both banks.
The wedding procession of Uma and Mahesh 4
is like its countless water creatures,

रघुबर जनम अनंद बधाई।
भवँर तरंग मनोहरताई॥

४० बालचरित चहु बंधु के बनज बिपुल बहुरंग।
नृप रानी परिजन सुकृत मधुकर बारि बिहंग॥

१ सीय स्वयंबर कथा सुहाई।
सरित सुहावनि सो छबि छाई॥
नदी नाव पटु प्रस्न अनेका।
केवट कुसल उतर सबिबेका॥
२ सुनि अनुकथन परस्पर होई।
पथिक समाज सोह सरि सोई॥
घोर धार भृगुनाथ रिसानी।
घाट सुबद्ध राम बर बानी॥
३ सानुज राम बिबाह उछाहू।
सो सुभ उमग सुखद सब काहू॥
कहत सुनत हरषहिं पुलकाहीं।
ते सुकृती मन मुदित नहाहीं॥
४ राम तिलक हित मंगल साजा।
परब जोग जनु जुरे समाजा॥
काई कुमति केकई केरी।
परी जासु फल बिपति घनेरी॥

and the festivities of the Raghu prince's birth
are its alluring eddies and waves.

The childhood pastimes of the four brothers 40
are its densely blooming lotuses,
and the merits of the king, queens, and their clan
are bees and water birds.

The lovely tale of Sita's bridegroom choice 1
is the brilliance of this delightful river.
Its boats are many probing questions,
with skilled oarsmen of discriminating replies.
Discussions that ensue from hearing the tale 2
are the company of wayfarers along the shore.
The terrible torrent of the Bhrigu lord's* rage
meets the firm landing of Ram's noble speech.
The celebrations of Ram and his brothers' marriage 3
are beneficial floodwaters, overflowing with joy.
Those who thrill with bliss in their retelling
and hearing are virtuous and happy bathers.
The preparations for Ram's consecration 4
are like a festival day's massed crowd,
and Kaikeyi's errant mind is the algae
whose growth brings great misfortune.

* Parashuram.

४१ समन अमित उतपात सब भरत चरित जपजाग।
कलि अघ खल अवगुन कथन ते जलमल बग काग॥

१ कीरति सरित छहूँ रितु रूरी।
समय सुहावनि पावनि भूरी॥
हिम हिमसैलसुता सिव ब्याहू।
सिसिर सुखद प्रभु जनम उछाहू॥
२ बरनब राम बिबाह समाजू।
सो मुद मंगलमय रितुराजू॥
ग्रीषम दुसह राम बनगवनू।
पंथकथा खर आतप पवनू॥
३ बरषा घोर निसाचर रारी।
सुरकुल सालि सुमंगलकारी॥
राम राज सुख बिनय बड़ाई।
बिसद सुखद सोइ सरद सुहाई॥
४ सती सिरोमनि सिय गुन गाथा।
सोइ गुन अमल अनूपम पाथा॥
भरत सुभाउ सुसीतलताई।
सदा एकरस बरनि न जाई॥

४२ अवलोकनि बोलनि मिलनि प्रीति परसपर हास।
भायप भलि चहु बंधु की जल माधुरी सुबास॥

To pacify these countless calamities, 41
the deeds of Bharat are sacred fire-rites,
and accounts of Kali-age sins and scoundrels
are river muck, storks, and crows.

In all six seasons, this river of glory 1
is ever beautiful and holy.
Its winter is Shiva's wedding to Himalaya's daughter.
Early spring is the joy of the Lord's birth,
and the account of Ram's marriage party 2
is late spring, blessed king of seasons.
Ram's going to the forest is insufferable summer,
with the cruel sun and wind of his wayfaring.
The rains are his raging battle with demons, 3
blessing the paddy fields of the gods,
and the glory, joy, and decorum of Ram's reign
are clear, lovely autumn, bestowing bliss.
The praise of Sita, crown jewel of faithful wives, 4
is the matchless clarity of this river's water,
and Bharat's character is its coolness,
of a constancy beyond description.

The affectionate glances and conversations, 42
loving embraces and shared laughter
of the four brothers—their perfect fraternity—
is the water's sweet fragrance.

१ आरति बिनय दीनता मोरी।
लघुता ललित सुबारि न थोरी॥
अदभुत सलिल सुनत गुनकारी।
आस पिआस मनोमल हारी॥

२ राम सुप्रेमहि पोषत पानी।
हरत सकल कलि कलुष गलानी॥
भव श्रम सोषक तोषक तोषा।
समन दुरित दुख दारिद दोषा॥

३ काम कोह मद मोह नसावन।
बिमल बिबेक बिराग बढ़ावन॥
सादर मज्जन पान किए तें।
मिटहिं पाप परिताप हिए तें॥

४ जिन्ह एहिं बारि न मानस धोए।
ते कायर कलिकाल बिगोए॥
तृषित निरखि रबि कर भव बारी।
फिरिहहिं मृग जिमि जीव दुखारी॥

४३क मति अनुहारि सुबारि गुन गन गनि मन अन्हवाइ।
सुमिरि भवानी संकरहि कह कबि कथा सुहाइ॥

४३ख अब रघुपति पद पंकरुह हियँ धरि पाइ प्रसाद।
कहउँ जुगल मुनिबर्य कर मिलन सुभग संबाद॥

My own longing, humility, and wretchedness 1
are the sheer lightness of this lovely liquid.
This wondrous water works by hearing,
quenching desire's thirst and cleansing the heart.
Nurturing love for Ram, it rinses away 2
all the sin and weariness of the Kali age,
eases rebirth's strain, satiates satisfaction itself,
and quells sin, sorrow, and poverty.
It destroys lust, anger, and delusion, 3
promoting pure discrimination and detachment.
Reverently bathing in it and drinking of it
effaces the sin and suffering of the heart.
Those who have not cleansed their minds in this water 4
are cowards, deceived by the dark age.
Like thirsty deer, spying a sun-spawned mirage
and chasing it, are these wretched souls.

Thus listing, according to my understanding, 43a
this water's merits, bathing my mind in it,
and recalling Shiva and Bhavani,
this poet will tell the beautiful story.

Now placing my heart at the Raghu lord's lovely feet 43b
and obtaining his grace,[95]
I will narrate the meeting and dialogue
of the two exemplary sages.

The Story of Shiva and Bhavani

१ भरद्वाज मुनि बसहिं प्रयागा।
तिन्हहि राम पद अति अनुरागा॥
तापस सम दम दया निधाना।
परमारथ पथ परम सुजाना॥
२ माघ मकरगत रबि जब होई।
तीरथपतिहिं आव सब कोई॥
देव दनुज किंनर नर श्रेनीं।
सादर मज्जहिं सकल त्रिबेनीं॥
३ पूजहिं माधव पद जलजाता।
परसि अखय बटु हरषहिं गाता॥
भरद्वाज आश्रम अति पावन।
परम रम्य मुनिबर मन भावन॥
४ तहाँ होइ मुनि रिषय समाजा।
जाहिं जे मज्जन तीरथ राजा॥
मज्जहिं प्रात समेत उछाहा।
कहहिं परसपर हरि गुन गाहा॥

४४ ब्रह्म निरूपन धरम बिधि बरनहिं तत्त्व बिभाग।
कहहिं भगति भगवंत कै संजुत ग्यान बिराग॥

१ एहि प्रकार भरि माघ नहाहीं।
पुनि सब निज निज आश्रम जाहीं॥
प्रति संबत अति होइ अनंदा।
मकर मज्जि गवनहिं मुनिबृंदा॥

Sage Bharadvaj resided at Prayag, 1
greatly devoted to the feet of Ram.
An ascetic rich in restraint and compassion,
he was adept in the path of liberation.
In the month of Magh,* when the sun is in Makar,† 2
everyone comes to this king of holy places.
Companies of gods, demigods, demons, and men
all reverently bathe in the triple confluence.
They worship Madhav's lovely feet, 3
and thrill to touch the undying banyan.
Bharadvaj's hermitage is holy
and delightful, pleasing to the highest sages.
There assemble all the seers and adepts 4
who come to bathe at Prayag.
After joyous morning baths,
they regale one another with praise of Hari.

Describing the nature of God, the duties of dharma, 44
and the science of metaphysics,
they teach devotion to the Lord
joined with wisdom and detachment.

Throughout Magh they bathe here, 1
then disperse to their various ashrams.
Each year, after participating with great joy
in the Makar assembly, the sages depart.

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* January–February.
† Zodiacal sign of a sea creature, equivalent to Capricorn in Western astrology.

२ एक बार भरि मकर नहाए।
सब मुनीस आश्रमन्ह सिधाए॥
जागबलिक मुनि परम बिबेकी।
भरद्वाज राखे पद टेकी॥
३ सादर चरन सरोज पखारे।
अति पुनीत आसन बैठारे॥
करि पूजा मुनि सुजसु बखानी।
बोले अति पुनीत मृदु बानी॥
४ नाथ एक संसउ बड़ मोरें।
करगत बेदतत्त्व सबु तोरें॥
कहत सो मोहि लागत भय लाजा।
जौं न कहउँ बड़ होइ अकाजा॥

४५ संत कहहिं असि नीति प्रभु श्रुति पुरान मुनि गाव।
होइ न बिमल बिबेक उर गुर सन किएँ दुराव॥

१ अस बिचारि प्रगटउँ निज मोहू।
हरहु नाथ करि जन पर छोहू॥
राम नाम कर अमित प्रभावा।
संत पुरान उपनिषद गावा॥
२ संतत जपत संभु अबिनासी।
सिव भगवान ग्यान गुन रासी॥
आकर चारि जीव जग अहहीं।
कासीं मरत परम पद लहहीं॥

Once, at the end of the ritual month, 2
as all the sages left for their abodes,
Yajnavalkya, a supremely wise seer,
was reverently detained by Bharadvaj.
He worshipfully washed his holy feet 3
and led him to a spotless seat.
Saluting that sage, he sang his praise
and spoke in a sweet and pure voice—
"Master, I harbor one great doubt, 4
and you grasp all mysteries of the Veda.
I am fearful and ashamed to utter it,
yet if I do not, it will be my great loss.

It is the counsel of the holy, lord, 45
and of scripture, lore, and the sages,
that pure wisdom never arises within
if one conceals anything from a teacher.

Reflecting on this, I reveal my confusion. 1
Dispel it, master, taking pity on this humble one.
The name of Ram has infinite potency—
so sing the saints, *purāṇas,* and *upaniṣads.*
Imperishable Shambhu ever repeats it, 2
divine Shiva, locus of wisdom and merit,
and when the four kinds of worldly beings
die in Kashi and reach the highest state,

३ सोपि राम महिमा मुनिराया।
सिव उपदेसु करत करि दाया॥
रामु कवन प्रभु पूछउँ तोही।
कहिअ बुझाइ कृपानिधि मोही॥
४ एक राम अवधेस कुमारा।
तिन्ह कर चरित बिदित संसारा॥
नारि बिरहँ दुखु लहेउ अपारा।
भयउ रोषु रन रावनु मारा॥

४६ प्रभु सोइ राम कि अपर कोउ जाहि जपत त्रिपुरारि।
सत्यधाम सर्बग्य तुम्ह कहहु बिबेकु बिचारि॥

१ जैसें मिटै मोर भ्रम भारी।
कहहु सो कथा नाथ बिस्तारी॥
जागबलिक बोले मुसुकाई।
तुम्हहि बिदित रघुपति प्रभुताई॥
२ रामभगत तुम्ह मन क्रम बानी।
चतुराई तुम्हारि मैं जानी॥
चाहहु सुनै राम गुन गूढ़ा।
कीन्हिहु प्रस्न मनहुँ अति मूढ़ा॥
३ तात सुनहु सादर मनु लाई।
कहउँ राम कै कथा सुहाई॥
महामोहु महिषेसु बिसाला।
रामकथा कालिका कराला॥

that too, king of sages, is by the power of 'Ram,' 3
which Shiva mercifully teaches them.
But I ask you, lord—who is Ram?
Most merciful one, explain this to me.
There is one Ram, son of Avadh's king, 4
whose deeds are known in the world.
Bereft of his wife, he suffered endlessly,
then, growing angry, slew Ravan in battle.

Is it that Ram, lord, or some other, 46
whose name Tripurari repeats?
Truth abides in you, all-knowing one.
Reflect on your wisdom, and tell me.

To erase my deep delusion, 1
relate that story, master, in detail."
Yajnavalkya replied with a smile,
"Lord Raghu's greatness is known to you
who are devoted to Ram in thought, word, and deed. 2
But I perceive your cleverness—
longing to hear of Ram's hidden nature,
you inquire as if you were an utter fool.
So listen reverently and attentively, brother, 3
as I narrate Ram's beautiful story.
To the great buffalo-demon of delusion
Ram's tale is the black avenger Kali.

४ रामकथा ससि किरन समाना।
संत चकोर करहिं जेहि पाना॥
ऐसेइ संसय कीन्ह भवानी।
महादेव तब कहा बखानी॥

४७ कहउँ सो मति अनुहारि अब उमा संभु संबाद।
भयउ समय जेहि हेतु जेहि सुनु मुनि मिटिहि
बिषाद॥

१ एक बार त्रेता जुग माहीं।
संभु गए कुंभज रिषि पाहीं॥
संग सती जगजननि भवानी।
पूजे रिषि अखिलेस्वर जानी॥
२ राम कथा मुनिबर्ज बखानी।
सुनी महेस परम सुखु मानी॥
रिषि पूछी हरिभगति सुहाई।
कही संभु अधिकारी पाई॥
३ कहत सुनत रघुपति गुन गाथा।
कछु दिन तहाँ रहे गिरिनाथा॥
मुनि सन बिदा मागि त्रिपुरारी।
चले भवन सँग दच्छकुमारी॥
४ तेहि अवसर भंजन महिभारा।
हरि रघुबंस लीन्ह अवतारा॥

The story of Ram is like moonbeams 4
that the saints, like *cakor* birds, sip.
Just such a doubt was expressed by Bhavani,
and great Shiva answered it at length.

I will now recount, according to my knowledge, 47
that dialogue of Uma and Shiva,
and when and how it occurred. Listen, sage,
and your gloom will be dispelled.

Once during the Treta age,[1] 1
Shiva went to the pot-born seer Agastya
accompanied by Sati,* mother of the world.
The seer worshiped him as lord of all,
and expounded the tale of Ram, 2
to which Shiva listened with greatest delight.
Then the seer inquired into devotion to Hari,
and Shiva told him, perceiving his worthiness.
Thus telling and hearing of Lord Raghu's glory, 3
the lord of mountains stayed for some days.
Then, requesting the sage's leave, Tripurari
went home with Sati, Daksha's daughter.
At that time, to relieve earth's burden, 4
Lord Hari had incarnated in the Raghu clan.

* Shiva's first wife, who will reincarnate as Parvati.

पिता बचन तजि राजु उदासी।
दंडक बन बिचरत अबिनासी॥

४८क हृदयँ बिचारत जात हर केहि बिधि दरसनु होइ।
गुप्त रूप अवतरेउ प्रभु गएँ जान सबु कोइ॥

४८ख संकर उर अति छोभु सती न जानहिं मरमु सोइ।
तुलसी दरसन लोभु मन डरु लोचन लालची॥

१ रावन मरन मनुज कर जाचा।
प्रभु बिधि बचनु कीन्ह चह साचा॥
जौं नहिं जाउँ रहइ पछितावा।
करत बिचारु न बनत बनावा॥
२ एहि बिधि भए सोचबस ईसा।
तेही समय जाइ दससीसा॥
लीन्ह नीच मारीचहि संगा।
भयउ तुरत सोइ कपट कुरंगा॥
३ करि छलु मूढ़ हरी बैदेही।
प्रभु प्रभाउ तस बिदित न तेही॥
मृग बधि बंधु सहित हरि आए।
आश्रमु देखि नयन जल छाए॥
४ बिरह बिकल नर इव रघुराई।
खोजत बिपिन फिरत दोउ भाई॥

Renouncing the kingdom at his father's word,
that imperishable one roamed the Dandak forest.

As he went along, Shiva pondered 48a
how he might gain sight of him—
"The Lord has taken birth in secret,
and if I go to him, everyone will know."

Shankar's heart was greatly agitated, 48b
but Sati did not perceive this mystery.
Tulsi says, he craved sight of God,
his mind as reticent as his eyes were greedy.

"Ravan asked for death at a man's hand, 1
and the Lord wants to fulfill Brahma's word.
Yet if I do not go to him, I will always regret it."
So he pondered, without resolution,
and that god grew greatly perplexed. 2
Just then, ten-headed Ravan went there,
taking along the vile Marich,
who at once became an illusory deer.
Deceitfully, that fool stole Sita, Videha's daughter, 3
not knowing the extent of the Lord's power.
Slaying the deer, Hari returned with his brother
and gazed at the hermitage with tear-filled eyes.
Like any man, the Raghu lord suffered in separation, 4
as the two brothers combed the forest.

कबहूँ जोग बियोग न जाकें।
देखा प्रगट बिरह दुखु ताकें॥

४९ अति बिचित्र रघुपति चरित जानहिं परम सुजान।
जे मतिमंद बिमोह बस हृदयँ धरहिं कछु आन॥

१ संभु समय तेहि रामहि देखा।
उपजा हियँ अति हरषु बिसेषा॥
भरि लोचन छबिसिंधु निहारी।
कुसमय जानि न कीन्हि चिन्हारी॥
२ जय सच्चिदानंद जग पावन।
अस कहि चलेउ मनोज नसावन॥
चले जात सिव सती समेता।
पुनि पुनि पुलकत कृपानिकेता॥
३ सतीं सो दसा संभु कै देखी।
उर उपजा संदेहु बिसेषी॥
संकरु जगतबंद्य जगदीसा।
सुर नर मुनि सब नावत सीसा॥
४ तिन्ह नृपसुतहि कीन्ह परनामा।
कहि सच्चिदानंद परधामा॥
भए मगन छबि तासु बिलोकी।
अजहुँ प्रीति उर रहति न रोकी॥

He who never knows union or parting
was seen to manifest the anguish of loss.

Extraordinary are the Raghu lord's deeds, 49
which only the wisest comprehend,
but the dull-witted who are in delusion's thrall
imagine something else.

It was then that Shiva beheld Ram, 1
and a wondrous joy arose in his heart.
He gazed long at the ocean of beauty,
but mindful of the moment, did not present himself.
"Hail truth-knowledge-bliss, world-purifier!"— 2
saying only this, Kama's slayer departed.
As merciful Shiva went away with Sati,
his body again and again flushed with joy.
When Sati saw Shambhu in that state, 3
a distinct doubt arose in her heart.
"Shankar is the world-revered lord of creation;
all gods, humans, and seers bow before him.
Yet he saluted a king's son, calling him 4
'truth-knowledge-bliss,' and 'supreme abode,'
and seeing his beauty, grew so distracted
that even now he cannot control his love.

५० ब्रह्म जो ब्यापक बिरज अज अकल अनीह अभेद।
सो कि देह धरि होइ नर जाहि न जानत बेद॥

१ बिष्नु जो सुर हित नरतनु धारी।
सोउ सर्बग्य जथा त्रिपुरारी॥
खोजइ सो कि अग्य इव नारी।
ग्यानधाम श्रीपति असुरारी॥
२ संभुगिरा पुनि मृषा न होई।
सिव सर्बग्य जान सबु कोई॥
अस संसय मन भयउ अपारा।
होइ न हृदयँ प्रबोध प्रचारा॥
३ जद्यपि प्रगट न कहेउ भवानी।
हर अंतरजामी सब जानी॥
सुनहि सती तव नारि सुभाऊ।
संसय अस न धरिअ उर काऊ॥
४ जासु कथा कुंभज रिषि गाई।
भगति जासु मैं मुनिहि सुनाई॥
सोइ मम इष्टदेव रघुबीरा।
सेवत जाहि सदा मुनि धीरा॥

५ मुनि धीर जोगी सिद्ध संतत
बिमल मन जेहि ध्यावहीं।
कहि नेति निगम पुरान आगम
जासु कीरति गावहीं॥

All-pervading godhead, stainless and unborn, 50
unitary, desireless, nondual,
whom even the Veda cannot comprehend—
can it assume form as man?

Vishnu, who takes human form for the gods' sake, 1
is as all-knowing as Tripurari.
Would he search for a woman like an ignorant man,
Shri's lord, who is wisdom's abode and demons' foe?
Yet Shambhu's utterance cannot be false, 2
for Shiva is omniscient, as everyone knows."
This dilemma loomed large in her mind,
and her heart remained unenlightened.
Although Bhavani said nothing openly, 3
Hara, the inner knower, understood all.
"Listen, Sati, this is your woman's nature.
Such doubt should never be entertained!
He whose tale was sung by Agastya the pot-born seer, 4
and whose devotion I expounded to him,
is that very Raghu hero, my chosen god,
who is ever worshiped by steadfast sages.

Steadfast sages, yogis, and adepts ever meditate on him 5
with purified hearts
and Vedas, *purāṇas,* and *tantras* sing his glory
only by calling him 'Not this...'

सोइ रामु ब्यापक ब्रह्म भुवन
निकाय पति माया धनी।
अवतरेउ अपने भगत हित
निजतंत्र नित रघुकुलमनी॥

५१ लाग न उर उपदेसु जदपि कहेउ सिवँ बार बहु।
बोले बिहसि महेसु हरिमाया बलु जानि जियँ॥

१ जौं तुम्हरें मन अति संदेहू।
तौ किन जाइ परीछा लेहू॥
तब लगि बैठ अहउँ बटछाहीं।
जब लगि तुम्ह ऐहहु मोहि पाहीं॥
२ जैसें जाइ मोह भ्रम भारी।
करेहु सो जतनु बिबेक बिचारी॥
चलीं सती सिव आयसु पाई।
करहिं बिचारु करौं का भाई॥
३ इहाँ संभु अस मन अनुमाना।
दच्छसुता कहुँ नहिं कल्याना॥
मोरेहु कहें न संसय जाहीं।
बिधि बिपरीत भलाई नाहीं॥
४ होइहि सोइ जो राम रचि राखा।
को करि तर्क बढ़ावै साखा॥
अस कहि लगे जपन हरिनामा।
गईं सती जहँ प्रभु सुखधामा॥

That same Ram—all-pervading God, lord of universes,
master of Maya, and eternally
autonomous one—for his servants' sake,
has descended as the jewel of the Raghus."

Shiva's instruction, though repeated many times, 51
did not penetrate her heart.
And so, inwardly musing on Hari's illusory power,
he said with a smile—

"If your mind harbors so much doubt, 1
then why not go and test him?
I will sit in the shade of this banyan
until you return to me.
To dispel your great delusion, 2
ponder well, then try what you may."
At Shiva's command, Sati departed,
wondering, "Oh dear, what shall I do?"
Meanwhile, Shiva mused thus— 3
"It does not bode well for Daksha's daughter
that, even after my words, her doubt remained.
Fate is adverse, and nothing good will come of this.
But it shall be as Ram has ordained— 4
Why complicate things with conjecture?"[2]
Then he began repeating Hari's name,
while Sati proceeded to the Lord, abode of joy.

५२ पुनि पुनि हृदयँ बिचारु करि धरि सीता कर रूप।
आगें होइ चलि पंथ तेहिं जेहिं आवत नरभूप॥

१ लछिमन दीख उमाकृत बेषा।
चकित भए भ्रम हृदयँ बिसेषा॥
कहि न सकत कछु अति गंभीरा।
प्रभु प्रभाउ जानत मतिधीरा॥
२ सती कपटु जानेउ सुरस्वामी।
सबदरसी सब अंतरजामी॥
सुमिरत जाहि मिटइ अग्याना।
सोइ सरबग्य रामु भगवाना॥
३ सती कीन्ह चह तहँहुँ दुराऊ।
देखहु नारि सुभाव प्रभाऊ॥
निज माया बलु हृदयँ बखानी।
बोले बिहसि रामु मृदु बानी॥
४ जोरि पानि प्रभु कीन्ह प्रनामू।
पिता समेत लीन्ह निज नामू॥
कहेउ बहोरि कहाँ बृषकेतू।
बिपिन अकेलि फिरहु केहि हेतू॥

५३ राम बचन मृदु गूढ़ सुनि उपजा अति संकोचु।
सती सभीत महेस पहिं चलीं हृदयँ बड़ सोचु॥

After much inner reflection, 52
she assumed the form of Sita
and went toward the path
that the prince of men had taken.

Lakshman, seeing the guise taken by Uma, 1
was amazed and confounded
yet could say nothing, remaining solemn
and resolute, mindful of his master's power.
The Lord of gods perceived Sati's ruse— 2
the all-seeing, inner knower of all,
at whose recall ignorance is erased,
the omniscient one, Ram, supreme God.
Yet Sati sought to deceive him— 3
behold the force of feminine nature!
Inwardly praising his own illusion's power,
Ram smiled and addressed her sweetly.
The Lord joined his palms in salutation, 4
identifying his father and himself,
then added, "But where is your bull-bannered lord,
and why do you wander alone in this wood?"

Hearing Ram's gentle but profound words, 53
she was utterly abashed.
Sati turned timidly back toward Shiva,
great anxiety in her heart.

१ मैं संकर कर कहा न माना।
निज अग्यानु राम पर आना॥
जाइ उतरु अब देहउँ काहा।
उर उपजा अति दारुन दाहा॥
२ जाना राम सतीं दुखु पावा।
निज प्रभाउ कछु प्रगटि जनावा॥
सतीं दीख कौतुकु मग जाता।
आगें रामु सहित श्री भ्राता॥
३ फिरि चितवा पाछें प्रभु देखा।
सहित बंधु सिय सुंदर बेषा॥
जहँ चितवहिं तहँ प्रभु आसीना।
सेवहिं सिद्ध मुनीस प्रबीना॥
४ देखे सिव बिधि बिष्नु अनेका।
अमित प्रभाउ एक तें एका॥
बंदत चरन करत प्रभु सेवा।
बिबिध बेष देखे सब देवा॥

५४ सती बिधात्री इंदिरा देखीं अमित अनूप।
जेहिं जेहिं बेष अजादि सुर तेहि तेहि तन अनुरूप॥

१ देखे जहँ तहँ रघुपति जेते।
सक्तिन्ह सहित सकल सुर तेते॥
जीव चराचर जो संसारा।
देखे सकल अनेक प्रकारा॥

"I did not heed Shankar's words, 1
and projected my own ignorance on Ram.
Now what answer will I give him?"
A fierce fire was kindled in her heart.
Ram understood Sati's sorrow 2
and revealed to her a little of his majesty.
As she went along, Sati saw a marvel—
before her, Ram with his wife and brother!
Turning to look back, she again saw the Lord 3
with his brother and Sita, in beautiful garb.
Wherever she glanced, he was enthroned,
attended by perfected ones and seers.
She saw countless Shivas, Brahmas, Vishnus, 4
each surpassingly splendid,
bowing in adoration at the Lord's feet,
and she saw all the gods in manifold forms.

She saw Satis, Sarasvatis, and Lakshmis, too, 54
endless and incomparable,
paired with the forms assumed by Brahma
and the other great gods.

Wherever she saw the Raghu lord, 1
there were all the gods with their *śaktis,*[3]
and creation's sentient and insentient beings—
she beheld them all in endless profusion.

२ पूजहिं प्रभुहि देव बहु बेषा।
राम रूप दूसर नहिं देखा॥
अवलोके रघुपति बहुतेरे।
सीता सहित न बेष घनेरे॥
३ सोइ रघुबर सोइ लछिमनु सीता।
देखि सती अति भईं सभीता॥
हृदय कंप तन सुधि कछु नाहीं।
नयन मूदि बैठीं मग माहीं॥
४ बहुरि बिलोकेउ नयन उघारी।
कछु न दीख तहँ दच्छकुमारी॥
पुनि पुनि नाइ राम पद सीसा।
चलीं तहाँ जहँ रहे गिरीसा॥

५५ गईं समीप महेस तब हँसि पूछी कुसलात।
लीन्हि परीछा कवन बिधि कहहु सत्य सब बात॥

१ सतीं समुझि रघुबीर प्रभाऊ।
भय बस सिव सन कीन्ह दुराऊ॥
कछु न परीछा लीन्हि गोसाईं।
कीन्ह प्रनामु तुम्हारिहि नाईं॥
२ जो तुम्ह कहा सो मृषा न होई।
मोरें मन प्रतीति अति सोई॥
तब संकर देखेउ धरि ध्याना।
सतीं जो कीन्ह चरित सबु जाना॥

Gods in endless forms adored the Lord, 2
yet she saw Ram in but a single guise.
The Raghu lord appeared to her countless times
along with Sita, yet never in variant forms.
Everywhere the same Ram, Lakshman, and Sita! 3
Sati was utterly bewildered at the sight,
her heart shook, she lost bodily awareness,
shut her eyes, and sat down on the path.
When she opened her eyes and looked again, 4
Daksha's daughter saw nothing there.
Bowing her head repeatedly to Ram,
she returned to her lord of mountains.

At her approach, the great god smiled 55
and inquired after her welfare,
then asked, "What sort of test did you undertake?
Truthfully tell me all."

Sati, now knowing Ram's greatness, 1
was afraid and sought to deceive Shiva.
"I performed no test, my lord,
but merely saluted him, as you did.
What you have said cannot be false— 2
my heart trusts this completely."
Then, in meditation, Shankar saw
and understood all that Sati had done,

३ बहुरि राममायहि सिरु नावा।
प्रेरि सतिहि जेहिं झूँठ कहावा॥
हरि इच्छा भावी बलवाना।
हृदयँ बिचारत संभु सुजाना॥
४ सतीं कीन्ह सीता कर बेषा।
सिव उर भयउ बिषाद बिसेषा॥
जौं अब करउँ सती सन प्रीती।
मिटइ भगति पथु होइ अनीती॥

५६ परम पुनीत न जाइ तजि किएँ प्रेम बड़ पापु।
प्रगटि न कहत महेसु कछु हृदयँ अधिक संतापु॥

१ तब संकर प्रभु पद सिरु नावा।
सुमिरत रामु हृदयँ अस आवा॥
एहिं तन सतिहि भेट मोहि नाहीं।
सिव संकल्पु कीन्ह मन माहीं॥
२ अस बिचारि संकरु मतिधीरा।
चले भवन सुमिरत रघुबीरा॥
चलत गगन भै गिरा सुहाई।
जय महेस भलि भगति दृढ़ाई॥
३ अस पन तुम्ह बिनु करइ को आना।
रामभगत समरथ भगवाना॥
सुनि नभगिरा सती उर सोचा।
पूछा सिवहि समेत सकोचा॥

and he bowed his head to Ram's maya, 3
that provoked even Sati to tell a lie.
"Almighty is the fate willed by Hari"—
so wise Shiva mused in his heart.
But Sati had taken Sita's form, 4
and a keen despair arose in Shiva's breast.
"If I now make love to Sati, it will be
a misdeed,[4] defacing the way of devotion.

Supremely pure, she cannot be abandoned, 56
yet to love her is a grave sin."
Outwardly, Shiva said nothing,
but his heart burned in great anguish.

Then Shankar bowed to the Lord's feet, 1
and as he meditated on Ram, it came to him—
"I can no more unite with Sati in this form!"
and Shiva made this resolve in his mind.
Thus pondering, the determined Shankar 2
turned homeward, recalling the Raghu hero.
As he went, a voice came from heaven:
"Hail Shiva, staunch upholder of devotion!
Who but you could take such a vow?— 3
you, divine lord, and Ram's able devotee."
Hearing the celestial voice, Sati grew anxious
and hesitantly inquired of Shiva, "Tell me,

४ कीन्ह कवन पन कहहु कृपाला।
सत्यधाम प्रभु दीनदयाला॥
जदपि सतीं पूछा बहु भाँती।
तदपि न कहेउ त्रिपुर आराती॥

५७क सतीं हृदयँ अनुमान किय सबु जानेउ सर्बग्य।
कीन्ह कपटु मैं संभु सन नारि सहज जड़ अग्य॥

५७ख जलु पय सरिस बिकाइ देखहु प्रीति कि रीति भलि।
बिलग होइ रसु जाइ कपट खटाई परत पुनि॥

१ हृदयँ सोचु समुझत निज करनी।
चिंता अमित जाइ नहिं बरनी॥
कृपासिंधु सिव परम अगाधा।
प्रगट न कहेउ मोर अपराधा॥
२ संकर रुख अवलोकि भवानी।
प्रभु मोहि तजेउ हृदयँ अकुलानी॥
निज अघ समुझि न कछु कहि जाई।
तपइ अवाँ इव उर अधिकाई॥
३ सतिहि ससोच जानि बृषकेतू।
कहीं कथा सुंदर सुख हेतू॥
बरनत पंथ बिबिध इतिहासा।
बिस्वनाथ पहुँचे कैलासा॥

kind one, what vow have you taken, lord, 4
abode of truth and benefactor of the lowly?"
Yet although Sati inquired repeatedly,
the foe of the triple cities gave no reply.

Sati surmised in her heart: "The omniscient one 57a
has understood it all.
A woman, innately foolish and ignorant,
I sought to deceive Shiva!"

Water may be mixed with milk and sold, but— 57b
just see the etiquette of love—
stir in the sourness of deceit, and they separate
and the savor is spoiled.

Realizing what she had done, Sati grew heartsick 1
and endlessly, indescribably anxious.
"Shiva is a fathomless ocean of mercy
and so does not speak of my offense."
But marking his demeanor, Bhavani knew, 2
"My lord has renounced me!"—and despaired.
Dwelling on her sin yet not speaking of it,
her heart burned like a potter's kiln.
Knowing that Sati was depressed, 3
Shiva told lovely, entertaining tales.
Thus, with diverse legends recounted en route,
the lord of the world arrived at Kailash.*

* The sacred Himalayan peak on which Shiva lives.

४ तहँ पुनि संभु समुझि पन आपन।
बैठे बट तर करि कमलासन॥
संकर सहज सरूपु सम्हारा।
लागि समाधि अखंड अपारा॥

५८ सती बसहिं कैलास तब अधिक सोचु मन माहिं।
मरमु न कोऊ जान कछु जुग सम दिवस सिराहिं॥

१ नित नव सोचु सती उर भारा।
कब जैहउँ दुख सागर पारा॥
मैं जो कीन्ह रघुपति अपमाना।
पुनि पतिबचनु मृषा करि जाना॥
२ सो फलु मोहि बिधाताँ दीन्हा।
जो कछु उचित रहा सोइ कीन्हा॥
अब बिधि अस बूझिअ नहिं तोही।
संकर बिमुख जिआवसि मोही॥
३ कहि न जाइ कछु हृदय गलानी।
मन महुँ रामहि सुमिर सयानी॥
जौं प्रभु दीनदयालु कहावा।
आरति हरन बेद जसु गावा॥
४ तौ मैं बिनय करउँ कर जोरी।
छूटउ बेगि देह यह मोरी॥
जौं मोरें सिव चरन सनेहू।
मन क्रम बचन सत्य ब्रतु एहू॥

There Shambhu again recalled his vow, 4
and sat in lotus pose beneath a banyan.
Withdrawing into his innate being, Shankar
entered a profound and endless samadhi.[5]

Sati dwelt there on Mount Kailash, 58
her mind consumed by anxiety.
None knew the secret cause of this,
and the days dragged on like aeons.

Ever-new worries weighed on Sati's heart: 1
"When will I cross this sea of sorrow?
Because I insulted the Raghu Lord,
then thought my husband's words false,
fate has apportioned me this fruit, 2
doing as is only right.
But now, ordainer, it ill befits you
to keep me alive, estranged from Shiva."
The gloom of her heart cannot be told. 3
Then, wisely, she thought of Ram—
"You are called 'merciful to the wretched,' Lord,
and praised by the Veda for removing affliction,
and so, with joined palms, I beseech you 4
to quickly release me from this body of mine.
If I possess true love for Shiva's feet,
and hold firm to it in thought, word, and deed,

५९ तौ सबदरसी सुनिअ प्रभु करउ सो बेगि उपाइ।
होइ मरनु जेहिं बिनहिं श्रम दुसह बिपत्ति बिहाइ॥

१ एहि बिधि दुखित प्रजेसकुमारी।
अकथनीय दारुन दुखु भारी॥
बीतें संबत सहस सतासी।
तजी समाधि संभु अबिनासी॥
२ राम नाम सिव सुमिरन लागे।
जानेउ सतीं जगतपति जागे॥
जाइ संभु पद बंदनु कीन्हा।
सनमुख संकर आसनु दीन्हा॥
३ लगे कहन हरि कथा रसाला।
दच्छ प्रजेस भए तेहि काला॥
देखा बिधि बिचारि सब लायक।
दच्छहि कीन्ह प्रजापति नायक॥
४ बड़ अधिकार दच्छ जब पावा।
अति अभिमानु हृदयँ तब आवा॥
नहिं कोउ अस जनमा जग माहीं।
प्रभुता पाइ जाहि मद नाहीं॥

६० दच्छ लिए मुनि बोलि सब करन लगे बड़ जाग।
नेवते सादर सकल सुर जे पावत मख भाग॥

then hear me, all-seeing Lord! Make haste 59
and devise a means
to effortlessly cause my death
and end this unbearable pain."

In this way, Daksha's daughter[6] suffered 1
indescribably cruel and heavy sorrow.
Eighty-seven thousand years elapsed,
and deathless Shambhu emerged from samadhi.
When Shiva started saying the name of Ram, 2
Sati knew the lord of the world to be awake.
When she bowed at Shambhu's feet,
he gave her a seat before him,
and began telling charming tales of Hari. 3
At that time, Daksha became the lord of beings,[7]
for Brahma reckoned him fully worthy
and made him master of the lords of creation.
When Daksha obtained this vast sway, 4
great arrogance entered his heart,
for there is no one born in this world
who is not intoxicated by acquiring power.

Daksha summoned hosts of sages 60
and commenced a great fire sacrifice,
respectfully inviting all the gods
who partake of the offerings.

१ किंनर नाग सिद्ध गंधर्बा।
बधुन्ह समेत चले सुर सर्बा॥
बिष्नु बिरंचि महेसु बिहाई।
चले सकल सुर जान बनाई॥
२ सतीं बिलोके ब्योम बिमाना।
जात चले सुंदर बिधि नाना॥
सुर सुंदरी करहिं कल गाना।
सुनत श्रवन छूटहिं मुनि ध्याना॥
३ पूछेउ तब सिवँ कहेउ बखानी।
पिता जग्य सुनि कछु हरषानी॥
जौं महेसु मोहि आयसु देहीं।
कछु दिन जाइ रहौं मिस एहीं॥
४ पति परित्याग हृदयँ दुखु भारी।
कहइ न निज अपराध बिचारी॥
बोली सती मनोहर बानी।
भय संकोच प्रेम रस सानी॥

६१ पिता भवन उत्सव परम जौं प्रभु आयसु होइ।
तौ मैं जाउँ कृपायतन सादर देखन सोइ॥

१ कहेहु नीक मोरेहुँ मन भावा।
यह अनुचित नहिं नेवत पठावा॥
दच्छ सकल निज सुता बोलाईं।
हमरें बयर तुम्हउ बिसराईं॥

Kinnaras, serpents, *siddhas,* and heavenly minstrels[8] 1
went there, and all the gods with their wives.
Except for Vishnu, Brahma, and Mahesh,
all the deities set forth in fine vehicles.
Sati saw all their carriages in the sky, 2
moving in splendor, accompanied
by sweet songs of celestial beauties
that distracted sages from their meditations.
When she inquired, Shiva explained. 3
Hearing of her father's rite, she felt a bit cheered.
"If my lord Mahesh permits me,
I might visit for a time on this pretext."
Pained at heart by her husband's abandonment, 4
she did not speak of it, reflecting on her crime.[9]
Then Sati uttered these charming words,
imbued with meekness and affection—

"There is a great festival in my father's home, 61
and if my lord commands,
then, compassionate one, I would go there
and witness it with reverence."

Shiva said, "You speak rightly, and I too favor this, 1
yet it is improper that no invitation was sent.
Daksha has summoned all his daughters,
but omitted you in his hostility to me.

२ ब्रह्मसभाँ हम सन दुखु माना।
तेहि तें अजहुँ करहिं अपमाना॥
जौं बिनु बोलें जाहु भवानी।
रहइ न सीलु सनेहु न कानी॥
३ जदपि मित्र प्रभु पितु गुर गेहा।
जाइअ बिनु बोलेहुँ न सँदेहा॥
तदपि बिरोध मान जहँ कोई।
तहाँ गएँ कल्यानु न होई॥
४ भाँति अनेक संभु समुझावा।
भावी बस न ग्यानु उर आवा॥
कह प्रभु जाहु जो बिनहिं बोलाएँ।
नहिं भलि बात हमारे भाएँ॥

६२ कहि देखा हर जतन बहु रहइ न दच्छकुमारि।
दिए मुख्य गन संग तब बिदा कीन्ह त्रिपुरारि॥

१ पिता भवन जब गईं भवानी।
दच्छ त्रास काहुँ न सनमानी॥
सादर भलेहिं मिली एक माता।
भगिनीं मिलीं बहुत मुसुकाता॥
२ दच्छ न कछु पूछी कुसलाता।
सतिहि बिलोकि जरे सब गाता॥
सतीं जाइ देखेउ तब जागा।
कतहुँ न दीख संभु कर भागा॥

Once in Brahma's court, he felt offended by me, 2
and, because of this, even now affronts me.
If you go uninvited, Bhavani,
you will find neither affection nor respect.
Though a friend, master, father, or guru's home 3
may be visited, no doubt, without invitation,
yet to go where someone shows enmity
will do you no good."
Despite Shambhu's many admonitions, 4
wisdom did not dawn on her, by the power of fate.
At last, the lord said, "If you go uninvited,
no good will come of it, so I believe."

When Shiva saw that, despite all his efforts, 62
Daksha's daughter would not stay,
he deputed his foremost servants to accompany her
and bade her farewell.

When Bhavani reached her father's home, 1
out of fear of Daksha, no one received her.
Her mother alone met her with courtesy,
her sisters with much giggling.
Daksha did not even ask how she was, 2
for at the sight of Sati he burned with rage.
When she went to watch the sacrifice,
nowhere did she see a portion for Shiva.

३ तब चित चढ़ेउ जो संकर कहेऊ।
प्रभु अपमानु समुझि उर दहेऊ॥
पाछिल दुखु न हृदयँ अस ब्यापा।
जस यह भयउ महा परितापा॥
४ जद्यपि जग दारुन दुख नाना।
सब तें कठिन जाति अवमाना॥
समुझि सो सतिहि भयउ अति क्रोधा।
बहु बिधि जननीं कीन्ह प्रबोधा॥

६३ सिव अपमानु न जाइ सहि हृदयँ न होइ प्रबोध।
सकल सभहि हठि हटकि तब बोलीं बचन सक्रोध॥

१ सुनहु सभासद सकल मुनिंदा।
कही सुनी जिन्ह संकर निंदा॥
सो फलु तुरत लहब सब काहूँ।
भली भाँति पछिताब पिताहूँ॥
२ संत संभु श्रीपति अपबादा।
सुनिअ जहाँ तहँ असि मरजादा॥
काटिअ तासु जीभ जो बसाई।
श्रवन मूदि न त चलिअ पराई॥
३ जगदातमा महेसु पुरारी।
जगत जनक सब के हितकारी॥
पिता मंदमति निंदत तेही।
दच्छ सुक्र संभव यह देही॥

Then Shankar's words rose to her mind, 3
and her heart burned, knowing the insult to her lord.
Her past pain did not pervade her heart
as much as this searing affliction,
for of the many cruel sorrows in this world, 4
worst of all is an affront to one's own kind.[10]
Realizing this truth, Sati became furious,
though her mother tried in many ways to calm her.

Unable to endure the affront to Shiva, 63
unconsoled by any counsel,
she brashly interrupted the ceremony,
angrily declaring,

"Listen, you who are gathered here, and all great sages. 1
Those who have uttered or heard slander of Shiva
shall immediately reap its reward,
and my father will greatly repent his acts.
For wherever abuse of saints, Shiva, or Lakshmi's lord 2
is heard, the right response
is to cut out the slanderer's tongue, if you can,
and if not, to cover your ears and flee!
Purari is the great god, soul of creation, 3
father of the universe, benefactor of all.
Yet my dim-witted father would insult him.
This body was born of Daksha's seed,

४ तजिहउँ तुरत देह तेहि हेतू।
उर धरि चंद्रमौलि बृषकेतू॥
अस कहि जोग अगिनि तनु जारा।
भयउ सकल मख हाहाकारा॥

६४ सती मरनु सुनि संभु गन लगे करन मख खीस।
जग्य बिधंस बिलोकि भृगु रच्छा कीन्हि मुनीस॥

१ समाचार सब संकर पाए।
बीरभद्रु करि कोप पठाए॥
जग्य बिधंस जाइ तिन्ह कीन्हा।
सकल सुरन्ह बिधिवत फलु दीन्हा॥
२ भै जगबिदित दच्छ गति सोई।
जसि कछु संभु बिमुख कै होई॥
यह इतिहास सकल जग जानी।
ताते मैं संछेप बखानी॥
३ सतीं मरत हरि सन बरु मागा।
जनम जनम सिव पद अनुरागा॥
तेहि कारन हिमगिरि गृह जाई।
जनमीं पारबती तनु पाई॥
४ जब तें उमा सैल गृह जाईं।
सकल सिद्धि संपति तहँ छाईं॥
जहँ तहँ मुनिन्ह सुआश्रम कीन्हे।
उचित बास हिम भूधर दीन्हे॥

so I shall renounce it forthwith, 4
keeping the moon-crested lord in my heart!"
So saying, she consumed her body in yogic fire
to cries of woe from the whole assembly.

When Shiva's servants heard of Sati's death, 64
they began to destroy the sacrifice.
Seeing this desecration, the great seer Bhrigu
intervened to protect it.

When all these tidings reached Shankar 1
he was enraged and dispatched Virabhadra,[*]
who went there and destroyed the rite,
giving all the gods their just rewards.
Daksha's fate is world renowned, 2
and as befalls any foe of Shambhu.[11]
This story is known to everyone,
hence I have told it only briefly.
Dying, Sati asked this boon of Hari: 3
intense love for Shiva's feet in every future birth.
For this reason, she went to Himalaya's home
and was born in the form of Parvati.
After Uma came to the mountain's abode, 4
all riches and occult powers flourished there.
Everywhere, sages built fine ashrams
in lovely locales provided by the snowy peak.

* A ferocious attendant of Shiva.

६५ सदा सुमन फल सहित सब द्रुम नव नाना जाति।
प्रगटीं सुंदर सैल पर मनि आकर बहु भाँति॥

१ सरिता सब पुनीत जलु बहहीं।
खग मृग मधुप सुखी सब रहहीं॥
सहज बयरु सब जीवन्ह त्यागा।
गिरि पर सकल करहिं अनुरागा॥
२ सोह सैल गिरिजा गृह आएँ।
जिमि जनु रामभगति के पाएँ॥
नित नूतन मंगल गृह तासू।
ब्रह्मादिक गावहिं जसु जासू॥
३ नारद समाचार सब पाए।
कौतुकहीं गिरि गेह सिधाए॥
सैलराज बड़ आदर कीन्हा।
पद पखारि बर आसनु दीन्हा॥
४ नारि सहित मुनि पद सिरु नावा।
चरन सलिल सबु भवनु सिंचावा॥
निज सौभाग्य बहुत गिरि बरना।
सुता बोलि मेली मुनि चरना॥

६६ त्रिकालग्य सर्बग्य तुम्ह गति सर्बत्र तुम्हारि।
कहहु सुता के दोष गुन मुनिबर हृदयँ बिचारि॥

Young trees of countless varieties, 65
always laden with fruit and flowers,
appeared on that superb mountain
along with many gemstone mines.

All the rivers flowed with pure water, 1
and birds, animals, and bees dwelt there happily.
Shedding their natural enmity, all beings
on that mountain felt harmonious love.
The mountain shone at his daughter's coming 2
like one who has found devotion to Ram.
There was constant rejoicing in his home—
he whose fame is sung by Brahma and the gods.
Sage Narad got word of all this 3
and went in high spirits to the mountain's home.
The king of hills greatly honored him,
washed his feet, and gave him a fine seat.
Bowing with his wife at the sage's feet, 4
he had his house sprinkled with the washing water.
Proclaiming his good fortune, Himalaya
called his daughter and placed her before the seer.

"Omniscient one, knower of past, present, and future, 66
you roam everywhere,
so search your heart, great sage, and declare
our daughter's merits and flaws."

१ कह मुनि बिहसि गूढ़ मृदु बानी।
सुता तुम्हारि सकल गुन खानी॥
सुंदर सहज सुसील सयानी।
नाम उमा अंबिका भवानी॥
२ सब लच्छन संपन्न कुमारी।
होइहि संतत पियहि पिआरी॥
सदा अचल एहि कर अहिवाता।
एहि तें जसु पैहहिं पितु माता॥
३ होइहि पूज्य सकल जग माहीं।
एहि सेवत कछु दुर्लभ नाहीं॥
एहि कर नामु सुमिरि संसारा।
त्रिय चढ़िहहिं पतिब्रत असिधारा॥
४ सैल सुलच्छन सुता तुम्हारी।
सुनहु जे अब अवगुन दुइ चारी॥
अगुन अमान मातु पितु हीना।
उदासीन सब संसय छीना॥

६७ जोगी जटिल अकाम मन नगन अमंगल बेष।
अस स्वामी एहि कहँ मिलिहि परी हस्त असि रेख॥

१ सुनि मुनि गिरा सत्य जियँ जानी।
दुख दंपतिहि उमा हरषानी॥
नारदहूँ यह भेदु न जाना।
दसा एक समुझब बिलगाना॥

Smiling, the sage spoke sweetly and enigmatically— 1
"Your daughter is a treasury of all virtues,
beautiful, innately noble, wise,
bearing the names Uma, Ambika, and Bhavani.
A maiden endowed with every merit, 2
she will always be her husband's beloved.
The constancy of her marital happiness
will bring fame to her father and mother.
She will be universally revered, and nothing 3
will be beyond the reach of those who serve her.
Recalling her name, worldly wives
will walk the blade-fine path of fidelity.
Your daughter is amply favored, mountain king, 4
but listen now to just a few flaws—
worthless, disreputable, orphaned,
indifferent, and careless of all affairs,

a yogi with matted hair and dispassionate heart, 67
naked, and strangely adorned—
such a husband will this girl find,
for so it is written on her palm."

Hearing the sage's words, sensing their truth, 1
the parental pair grieved while Uma rejoiced.
Not even Narad detected this,
for their reactions were alike, though their understanding
differed.

२ सकल सखीं गिरिजा गिरि मैना ।
पुलक सरीर भरे जल नैना ॥
होइ न मृषा देवरिषि भाषा ।
उमा सो बचनु हृदयँ धरि राखा ॥
३ उपजेउ सिव पद कमल सनेहू ।
मिलन कठिन मन भा संदेहू ॥
जानि कुअवसरु प्रीति दुराई ।
सखी उछँग बैठी पुनि जाई ॥
४ झूठि न होइ देवरिषि बानी ।
सोचहिं दंपति सखीं सयानी ॥
उर धरि धीर कहइ गिरिराऊ ।
कहहु नाथ का करिअ उपाऊ ॥

६८ कह मुनीस हिमवंत सुनु जो बिधि लिखा लिलार ।
देव दनुज नर नाग मुनि कोउ न मेटनिहार ॥

१ तदपि एक मैं कहउँ उपाई ।
होइ करै जौं दैउ सहाई ॥
जस बरु मैं बरनेउँ तुम्ह पाहीं ।
मिलिहि उमहि तस संसय नाहीं ॥
२ जे जे बर के दोष बखाने ।
ते सब सिव पहिं मैं अनुमाने ॥
जौं बिबाहु संकर सन होई ।
दोषउ गुन सम कह सबु कोई ॥

Parvati and her friends, Himalaya, and Maina 2
all trembled with emotion, tears filling their eyes.
"A divine sage's words cannot be false."
Knowing this, Uma inscribed them in her heart,
and love for Shiva's feet welled up within it, 3
though her mind was troubled by his inaccessibility.
Considering the circumstances, she hid her love
and sat among her girlfriends.
"The divine sage's words cannot be false"— 4
so her parents and older girlfriends pondered.
Composing himself, the mountain king asked,
"Lord, can anything be done to remedy this?"

Said the sage, "Listen, lord of snows: 68
What fate has written on the forehead,
no god or demon, human being, divine serpent,
or seer can ever erase.

Yet I will disclose one solution that, 1
with destiny's aid, might come to pass.
The bridegroom whom I have described
will be Uma's—no doubt about that.
But each of the flaws I enumerated, 2
I reckon to be found in Lord Shiva.
If she were to wed Shankar,
everyone would call these flaws virtues!

३ जौं अहि सेज सयन हरि करहीं।
बुध कछु तिन्ह कर दोषु न धरहीं॥
भानु कृसानु सर्ब रस खाहीं।
तिन्ह कहँ मंद कहत कोउ नाहीं॥
४ सुभ अरु असुभ सलिल सब बहई।
सुरसरि कोउ अपुनीत न कहई॥
समरथ कहुँ नहिं दोषु गोसाईं।
रबि पावक सुरसरि की नाईं॥

६९ जौं अस हिसिषा करहिं नर जड़ बिबेक अभिमान।
परहिं कलप भरि नरक महुँ जीव कि ईस समान॥

१ सुरसरि जल कृत बारुनि जाना।
कबहुँ न संत करहिं तेहि पाना॥
सुरसरि मिलें सो पावन जैसें।
ईस अनीसहि अंतरु तैसें॥
२ संभु सहज समरथ भगवाना।
एहि बिबाहँ सब बिधि कल्याना॥
दुराराध्य पै अहहिं महेसू।
आसुतोष पुनि किएँ कलेसू॥
३ जौं तपु करै कुमारि तुम्हारी।
भाविउ मेटि सकहिं त्रिपुरारी॥
जद्यपि बर अनेक जग माहीं।
एहि कहँ सिव तजि दूसर नाहीं॥

After all, Hari sleeps on a snake, 3
yet the wise impute no fault to him.
Sun and fire consume every sort of fluid,
and no one censures them.
Though pure and impure waters flow into her, 4
no one calls Ganga unholy.
The mighty have no flaws, your highness,
no more than sun, fire, and the gods' river.

If a foolish man, thinking himself wise, 69
seeks to emulate them,
he falls into hell for an aeon, for can a creature
be equal to the Lord?

Though liquor be made with Ganga water, 1
saintly people never partake of it,
yet, poured into Ganga, it becomes pure—
such is the gulf between God and beings!
Shambhu is the innately powerful lord, 2
and this wedding is auspicious in every way.
And, though hard to propitiate, that great god
is readily pleased by austerity.
If your daughter undertakes asceticism, 3
Tripurari Shiva can change her destiny.
There are countless grooms in the world,
but for her, none other than Shiva,

४ बर दायक प्रनतारति भंजन।
कृपासिंधु सेवक मन रंजन॥
इच्छित फल बिनु सिव अवराधें।
लहिअ न कोटि जोग जप साधें॥

७० अस कहि नारद सुमिरि हरि गिरिजहि दीन्हि असीस।
होइहि यह कल्यान अब संसय तजहु गिरीस॥

१ कहि अस ब्रह्मभवन मुनि गयऊ।
आगिल चरित सुनहु जस भयऊ॥
पतिहि एकांत पाइ कह मैना।
नाथ न मैं समुझे मुनि बैना॥
२ जौं घरु बरु कुलु होइ अनूपा।
करिअ बिबाहु सुता अनुरूपा॥
न त कन्या बरु रहउ कुआरी।
कंत उमा मम प्रानपिआरी॥
३ जौं न मिलिहि बरु गिरिजहि जोगू।
गिरि जड़ सहज कहिहि सबु लोगू॥
सोइ बिचारि पति करेहु बिबाहू।
जेहिं न बहोरि होइ उर दाहू॥
४ अस कहि परी चरन धरि सीसा।
बोले सहित सनेह गिरीसा॥
बरु पावक प्रगटै ससि माहीं।
नारद बचनु अन्यथा नाहीं॥

granter of boons, destroyer of devotees' afflictions, 4
and ocean of mercy, pleasing the hearts of his servants.
Without propitiating Shiva, the desired fruit will not
be gained even with millions of arduous practices."

So saying, and remembering Hari, Narad blessed 70
Himalaya's daughter, and declared,
"Now abandon doubts, mountain king,
for this good fortune will come to pass."

With this, the seer left for Brahma's abode. 1
Listen now to what happened next.
Alone with her husband, Maina said,
"Lord, I did not fathom the sage's speech.
If there is a matchless home, groom, and clan 2
worthy of our daughter, then marry her off,
or else she had better stay a virgin.
Husband, Uma is dear as life to me.
If no worthy groom can be found, 3
everyone will say, 'That mountain is inherently stupid!'[12]
Reflect on this, and arrange a match
that will not pain our hearts later on."
With this she fell at his feet, 4
and the lord of hills lovingly replied,
"The cool moon might catch fire,
yet Narad's utterance cannot be false.

७१ प्रिया सोचु परिहरहु सबु सुमिरहु श्रीभगवान।
पारबतिहि निरमयउ जेहिं सोइ करिहि कल्यान॥

१ अब जौं तुम्हहि सुता पर नेहू।
तौ अस जाइ सिखावनु देहू॥
करै सो तपु जेहिं मिलिहिं महेसू।
आन उपायँ न मिटिहि कलेसू॥
२ नारद बचन सगर्भ सहेतू।
सुंदर सब गुन निधि बृषकेतू॥
अस बिचारि तुम्ह तजहु असंका।
सबहि भाँति संकरु अकलंका॥
३ सुनि पति बचन हरषि मन माहीं।
गई तुरत उठि गिरिजा पाहीं॥
उमहि बिलोकि नयन भरे बारी।
सहित सनेह गोद बैठारी॥
४ बारहिं बार लेति उर लाई।
गदगद कंठ न कछु कहि जाई॥
जगत मातु सर्बग्य भवानी।
मातु सुखद बोलीं मृदु बानी॥

७२ सुनहि मातु मैं दीख अस सपन सुनावउँ तोहि।
सुंदर गौर सुबिप्रबर अस उपदेसेउ मोहि॥

Dearest, put aside all your worries 71
and meditate on the supreme Lord.
He who created Parvati
will assuredly accomplish her well-being.

Now, if you love your daughter, 1
go and instruct her to perform
such austerities as will win Shiva,
for nothing else can solve this problem.
Narad's words were deep and purposeful. 2
The bull-bannered one is handsome, a treasury of virtues.
Reflect on this and stop fretting,
for Shankar is flawless in every way."
At her husband's words, her heart was cheered 3
and she arose and hurried to her daughter.
At the sight of Uma, her eyes filled with tears
and she lovingly took her on her lap.
She hugged her again and again, 4
choking down sobs, unable to speak.
All-knowing Bhavani, mother of the world,
spoke sweet words to comfort her own mother.

"Oh mother, listen! I will tell you 72
about a dream I had:
a noble Brahman, fair and handsome,
gave me these instructions—

१ करहि जाइ तपु सैलकुमारी।
नारद कहा सो सत्य बिचारी॥
मातु पितहि पुनि यह मत भावा।
तपु सुखप्रद दुख दोष नसावा॥

२ तपबल रचइ प्रपंचु बिधाता।
तपबल बिष्नु सकल जग त्राता॥
तपबल संभु करहिं संघारा।
तपबल सेषु धरइ महिभारा॥

३ तप अधार सब सृष्टि भवानी।
करहि जाइ तपु अस जियँ जानी॥
सुनत बचन बिसमित महतारी।
सपन सुनायउ गिरिहि हँकारी॥

४ मातु पितहि बहुबिधि समुझाई।
चलीं उमा तप हित हरषाई॥
प्रिय परिवार पिता अरु माता।
भए बिकल मुख आव न बाता॥

७३ बेदसिरा मुनि आइ तब सबहि कहा समुझाइ।
पारबती महिमा सुनत रहे प्रबोधहि पाइ॥

१ उर धरि उमा प्रानपति चरना।
जाइ बिपिन लागीं तपु करना॥
अति सुकुमार न तनु तप जोगू।
पति पद सुमिरि तजेउ सबु भोगू॥

'Go forth, mountain's child, and practice asceticism, 1
mindful of the truth of Narad's words.
This course will please your parents, too.
Asceticism yields joy and ends sin and sorrow.
By ascetic power Brahma crafts the cosmos, 2
by ascetic power Vishnu preserves it,
by ascetic power Shambhu destroys it,
and by ascetic power serpent Shesh upholds the earth.
Asceticism is the basis of all creation, Bhavani. 3
Pondering this, go and practice it!'"
Hearing this, mother Maina was astonished.
She called for Himalaya and told him the dream.
After patient remonstration with her parents, 4
Uma went forth happily, bent on asceticism.
Her father, mother, and loving family
were anguished and unable to speak.

Then sage Vedashira arrived 73
and consoled them all with his discourse.
Hearing of the glory of Parvati,
they awoke to true understanding.

Setting her lord's feet in her heart, Uma 1
went to the forest and began ascetic practice.
Though a delicate maiden, unfit for such things,
she renounced all comfort, meditating on her master.

२ नित नव चरन उपज अनुरागा।
बिसरी देह तपहिं मनु लागा॥
संबत सहस मूल फल खाए।
सागु खाइ सत बरष गवाँए॥
३ कछु दिन भोजनु बारि बतासा।
किए कठिन कछु दिन उपबासा॥
बेल पाती महि परइ सुखाई।
तीनि सहस संबत सोइ खाई॥
४ पुनि परिहरे सुखानेउ परना।
उमहि नामु तब भयउ अपरना॥
देखि उमहि तप खीन सरीरा।
ब्रह्मगिरा भै गगन गभीरा॥

७४ भयउ मनोरथ सुफल तव सुनु गिरिराजकुमारि।
परिहरु दुसह कलेस सब अब मिलिहहिं त्रिपुरारि॥

१ अस तपु काहुँ न कीन्ह भवानी।
भए अनेक धीर मुनि ग्यानी॥
अब उर धरहु ब्रह्म बर बानी।
सत्य सदा संतत सुचि जानी॥
२ आवै पिता बोलावन जबहीं।
हठ परिहरि घर जाएहु तबहीं॥
मिलहिं तुम्हहि जब सप्त रिषीसा।
जानेहु तब प्रमान बागीसा॥

Feeling ever-new love for his feet, 2
she forgot her body and set her mind on austerities.
For a thousand years she ate roots and fruits,
then passed a hundred on only wild herbs.
For some days, she lived on water and air, 3
and for some more, in arduous fasting.
Dried wood-apple[13] leaves, fallen to earth,
were her food for three thousand years.
Then she relinquished even dried leaves, 4
and so Uma gained the name "Aparna."[14]
Seeing her body wasted by asceticism,
a deep, divine voice spoke from heaven—

"Listen, daughter of the mountain! 74
Your wish has borne fruit.
Cease your arduous exertions,
for now you will attain Shiva.

No one has done such austerities, Bhavani, 1
not even innumerable steadfast sages.
Now remember this divine message,
knowing it as forever true and holy.
When your father comes to summon you, 2
renounce your rigors and go home.
When you encounter the seven seers,
know this divine prophecy to be fulfilled."

३ सुनत गिरा बिधि गगन बखानी।
पुलक गात गिरिजा हरषानी॥
उमा चरित सुंदर मैं गावा।
सुनहु संभु कर चरित सुहावा॥
४ जब तें सतीं जाइ तनु त्यागा।
तब तें सिव मन भयउ बिरागा॥
जपहिं सदा रघुनायक नामा।
जहँ तहँ सुनहिं राम गुन ग्रामा॥

७५ चिदानंद सुखधाम सिव बिगत मोह मद काम।
बिचरहिं महि धरि हृदयँ हरि सकल लोक अभिराम॥

१ कतहुँ मुनिन्ह उपदेसहिं ग्याना।
कतहुँ राम गुन करहिं बखाना॥
जदपि अकाम तदपि भगवाना।
भगत बिरह दुख दुखित सुजाना॥
२ एहि बिधि गयउ कालु बहु बीती।
नित नै होइ राम पद प्रीती॥
नेमु प्रेमु संकर कर देखा।
अबिचल हृदयँ भगति कै रेखा॥
३ प्रगटे रामु कृतग्य कृपाला।
रूप सील निधि तेज बिसाला॥
बहु प्रकार संकरहि सराहा।
तुम्ह बिनु अस ब्रतु को निरबाहा॥

Hearing the Ordainer's voice from the sky, 3
Uma's body shivered with delight.
I have sung of her glorious acts—
now listen to those of Shambhu.
Ever since Sati left and relinquished her body, 4
Shiva's heart had become dispassionate.[15]
Constantly repeating the Raghu lord's name,
he roamed about, hearing of Ram's virtues.

Shiva—pure awareness and bliss, 75
without lust, arrogance, and delusion—
wandered the earth, heart focused on Hari,
enchanter of all creation.

Sometimes he imparted wisdom to sages 1
and sometimes expounded Ram's qualities.
Though forever free from desire, this divine lord
suffered in separation from his devotee.
A long time passed in this way, 2
as he felt ever-fresh love for Ram's feet.
Beholding Shankar's discipline and love
and devotion's indelible mark on his heart,
Ram appeared to him, gratified and gracious, 3
treasury of beauty, virtue, and immense radiance.
He praised Shankar greatly, saying,
"Who but you could hold to such a vow?"

४ बहुबिधि राम सिवहि समुझावा।
पारबती कर जन्मु सुनावा॥
अति पुनीत गिरिजा कै करनी।
बिस्तर सहित कृपानिधि बरनी॥

७६ अब बिनती मम सुनहु सिव जौं मो पर निज नेहु।
जाइ बिबाहहु सैलजहि यह मोहि मागें देहु॥

१ कह सिव जदपि उचित अस नाहीं।
नाथ बचन पुनि मेटि न जाहीं॥
सिर धरि आयसु करिअ तुम्हारा।
परम धरमु यह नाथ हमारा॥
२ मातु पिता गुर प्रभु कै बानी।
बिनहिं बिचार करिअ सुभ जानी॥
तुम्ह सब भाँति परम हितकारी।
अग्या सिर पर नाथ तुम्हारी॥
३ प्रभु तोषेउ सुनि संकर बचना।
भक्ति बिबेक धर्म जुत रचना॥
कह प्रभु हर तुम्हार पन रहेऊ।
अब उर राखेहु जो हम कहेऊ॥
४ अंतरधान भए अस भाषी।
संकर सोइ मूरति उर राखी॥
तबहिं सप्तरिषि सिव पहिं आए।
बोले प्रभु अति बचन सुहाए॥

Then Ram instructed Shiva at length, 4
telling him of Parvati's birth.
The deeds of the mountain's daughter, so utterly pure,
were recounted in detail by the merciful one.

"Now hear my entreaty, Shiva— 76
If you truly love me,
go and wed the daughter of the hills.
Grant me this request."

Shiva said, "Although this is not right,[16] 1
yet the Lord's word cannot be ignored.
To humbly accept your order,
Master, is my supreme duty.
The dictate of mother, father, guru, or lord 2
is done without thinking, knowing it to be right.
You are my supreme benefactor,
Lord, and I bow before your command."[17]
The Lord was satisfied by Shankar's speech, 3
an artful blend of devotion, discrimination, and dharma.
He said, "Hara, your vow is fulfilled.
Now, hold to what I have told you."
So saying, the Lord disappeared, 4
and Shankar kept his form in his heart.
Just then, the seven seers came to Shiva
and the god most politely addressed them,

७७ पारबती पहिं जाइ तुम्ह प्रेम परिच्छा लेहु ।
गिरिहि प्रेरि पठएहु भवन दूरि करेहु संदेहु ॥

१ रिषिन्ह गौरि देखी तहँ कैसी ।
मूरतिमंत तपस्या जैसी ॥
बोले मुनि सुनु सैलकुमारी ।
करहु कवन कारन तपु भारी ॥
२ केहि अवराधहु का तुम्ह चहहू ।
हम सन सत्य मरमु किन कहहू ॥
कहत बचन मनु अति सकुचाई ।
हँसिहहु सुनि हमारि जड़ताई ॥
३ मनु हठ परा न सुनइ सिखावा ।
चहत बारि पर भीति उठावा ॥
नारद कहा सत्य सोइ जाना ।
बिनु पंखन्ह हम चहहिं उड़ाना ॥
४ देखहु मुनि अबिबेकु हमारा ।
चाहिअ सदा सिवहि भरतारा ॥

७८ सुनत बचन बिहसे रिषय गिरिसंभव तव देह ।
नारद कर उपदेसु सुनि कहहु बसेउ किसु गेह ॥

"All of you, go to Parvati 77
and test her love.
Then, inspire Himalaya to bring her home,
allaying her doubts."

The sages went and saw Gauri there,[18] 1
looking like asceticism personified.
They said, "Daughter of the mountain,
Why do you perform such extreme practices?
Whom do you worship, and for what wish? 2
Why not tell us your true motive?"
Parvati said, "My heart hesitates to speak of it,
for you will laugh at my folly.
My obstinate mind, heedless of guidance, 3
seeks to erect a wall on water.
Taking Narad's words to be true,
though I lack wings, I yearn to fly.
Sages, just witness my imprudence— 4
I crave eternal Shiva as my husband!"

Hearing her words, the seers laughed. 78
"You are indeed sprung from a stone!
Tell us—who, heeding Narad's advice,
has ever made a happy home?

१ दच्छसुतन्ह उपदेसेन्हि जाई।
तिन्ह फिरि भवनु न देखा आई॥
चित्रकेतु कर घरु उन घाला।
कनककसिपु कर पुनि अस हाला॥
२ नारद सिख जे सुनहिं नर नारी।
अवसि होहिं तजि भवनु भिखारी॥
मन कपटी तन सज्जन चीन्हा।
आपु सरिस सबही चह कीन्हा॥
३ तेहि कें बचन मानि बिस्वासा।
तुम्ह चाहहु पति सहज उदासा॥
निर्गुन निलज कुबेष कपाली।
अकुल अगेह दिगंबर ब्याली॥
४ कहहु कवन सुखु अस बरु पाएँ।
भल भूलिहु ठग के बौराएँ॥
पंच कहें सिवँ सती बिबाही।
पुनि अवडेरि मराएन्हि ताही॥

७९ अब सुख सोवत सोचु नहिं भीख मागि भव खाहिं।
सहज एकाकिन्ह के भवन कबहुँ कि नारि खटाहिं॥

१ अजहूँ मानहु कहा हमारा।
हम तुम्ह कहुँ बरु नीक बिचारा॥
अति सुंदर सुचि सुखद सुसीला।
गावहिं बेद जासु जस लीला॥

He counseled Daksha's sons, 1
and they never saw home again.
He wrecked the household of Chitraketu,
then left Hiranyakashipu in the same state.[19]
Any man or woman who heeds Narad's advice 2
will surely abandon home and become a mendicant.
Though he sports holy garb, he has a wily mind
and wants to make everyone like himself.
Putting faith in his words, 3
you crave for a husband a born renouncer,
attributeless, immodest, an ill-garbed skull-bearer,
without family or home, a naked snake-wearer.
What happiness will you get with such a spouse? 4
The rant of that cheat has really muddled you!
On the elders' advice, Shiva wed Sati,
then quarreled with her and got her killed.

Now Shiva is carefree and sleeps easy, 79
eating the alms that he begs.
But can a woman find a place in the home
of such an innate hermit?

Even now, do heed our advice, 1
for we have thought of a good groom for you,
most handsome, pure, pleasing, and noble,
whose exploits are sung in the Vedas,

२ दूषन रहित सकल गुन रासी।
श्रीपति पुर बैकुंठ निवासी॥
अस बरु तुम्हहि मिलाउब आनी।
सुनत बिहसि कह बचन भवानी॥
३ सत्य कहेहु गिरिभव तनु एहा।
हठ न छूट छूटै बरु देहा॥
कनकउ पुनि पषान तें होई।
जारेहुँ सहजु न परिहर सोई॥
४ नारद बचन न मैं परिहरऊँ।
बसउ भवनु उजरउ नहिं डरऊँ॥
गुर कें बचन प्रतीति न जेही।
सपनेहुँ सुगम न सुख सिधि तेही॥

८० महादेव अवगुन भवन बिष्नु सकल गुन धाम।
जेहि कर मनु रम जाहि सन तेहि तेही सन काम॥

१ जौं तुम्ह मिलतेहु प्रथम मुनीसा।
सुनतिउँ सिख तुम्हारि धरि सीसा॥
अब मैं जन्मु संभु हित हारा।
को गुन दूषन करै बिचारा॥
२ जौं तुम्हरे हठ हृदयँ बिसेषी।
रहि न जाइ बिनु किएँ बरेषी॥
तौ कौतुकिअन्ह आलसु नाहीं।
बर कन्या अनेक जग माहीं॥

a flawless treasury of all virtues— 2
Shri's spouse, who lives in Vaikunth city![20]
Let us bring that groom to meet you."
Bhavani smiled on hearing this and replied,
"You have rightly called this body rock-born, 3
and I remain stubborn, even at risk of life.
Gold, too, comes out of stone,
and even when burned, does not forsake its nature.
I will not abandon Narad's instruction, 4
heedless of whether I make a home or wreck it.
Anyone lacking faith in a guru's words
finds no joy or success even in dreams.

Mahadev may be the abode of demerit, 80
and Vishnu the home of all virtues,
yet whoever beguiles your heart
is the one for whom you yearn!

Best of sages, had I met you sooner, 1
I would have humbly heeded your guidance.
Now I have squandered my life on Shambhu,
so what use is reckoning merits or flaws?
If your hearts are truly obstinate 2
and you cannot forgo fixing an engagement—
well, matchmakers never lack initiative,
and there are plenty of boys and girls in this world!

३ जन्म कोटि लगि रगर हमारी ।
बरउँ संभु न त रहउँ कुआरी ॥
तजउँ न नारद कर उपदेसू ।
आपु कहहिं सत बार महेसू ॥
४ मैं पा परउँ कहइ जगदंबा ।
तुम्ह गृह गवनहु भयउ बिलंबा ॥
देखि प्रेमु बोले मुनि ग्यानी ।
जय जय जगदंबिके भवानी ॥

८१ तुम्ह माया भगवान सिव सकल जगत पितु मातु ।
नाइ चरन सिर मुनि चले पुनि पुनि हरषत गातु ॥

१ जाइ मुनिन्ह हिमवंतु पठाए ।
करि बिनती गिरजहिं गृह ल्याए ॥
बहुरि सप्तरिषि सिव पहिं जाई ।
कथा उमा कै सकल सुनाई ॥
२ भए मगन सिव सुनत सनेहा ।
हरषि सप्तरिषि गवने गेहा ॥
मनु थिर करि तब संभु सुजाना ।
लगे करन रघुनायक ध्याना ॥
३ तारकु असुर भयउ तेहि काला ।
भुज प्रताप बल तेज बिसाला ॥
तेहिं सब लोक लोकपति जीते ।
भए देव सुख संपति रीते ॥

But, for a billion births, my obsession will remain 3
to marry Shambhu or stay a virgin.
I will not abandon Narad's instruction
if Mahesh himself, a hundred times, tells me to.
And now I beg you," the world's mother said, 4
"to return home, for it is getting late."
Seeing her love, those wise seers declared,
"Victory to Bhavani! Hail, Mother of creation!

You are Maya and Shiva is God— 81
father and mother of the universe."
Bowing their heads before her, the sages departed,
their limbs flushed with delight.

Returning, the sages sent Himalaya there 1
to entreat his daughter and bring her home.
Then the seven seers went to Shiva
and told him in full the tale of Uma.
Hearing of her love, Shiva became joyful, 2
and the seven wise ones went happily home.
Then, steadying his mind, Shambhu
began meditating on the Raghu lord.
At that time, a great demon named Tarak appeared, 3
with mighty arms and immense energy.
He conquered all the worlds and their rulers,
leaving the gods impoverished and despairing.

४ अजर अमर सो जीति न जाई।
हारे सुर करि बिबिध लराई॥
तब बिरंचि सन जाइ पुकारे।
देखे बिधि सब देव दुखारे॥

८२ सब सन कहा बुझाइ बिधि दनुज निधन तब होइ।
संभु सुक्र संभूत सुत एहि जीतइ रन सोइ॥

१ मोर कहा सुनि करहु उपाई।
होइहि ईस्वर करिहि सहाई॥
सतीं जो तजी दच्छ मख देहा।
जनमी जाइ हिमाचल गेहा॥
२ तेहिं तपु कीन्ह संभु पति लागी।
सिव समाधि बैठे सबु त्यागी॥
जदपि अहइ असमंजस भारी।
तदपि बात एक सुनहु हमारी॥
३ पठवहु कामु जाइ सिव पाहीं।
करै छोभु संकर मन माहीं॥
तब हम जाइ सिवहि सिर नाई।
करवाउब बिबाहु बरिआई॥
४ एहि बिधि भलेहिं देवहित होई।
मत अति नीक कहइ सबु कोई॥
अस्तुति सुरन्ह कीन्हि अति हेतू।
प्रगटेउ बिषमबान झषकेतू॥

Robust and immortal, he could not be defeated, 4
and the gods fought and lost many battles.
Then they went wailing to the creator,
who beheld them all in their misery.

Brahma explained to the assembled gods, 82
"This offspring of Danu[21] will die only
when a son is born of Shiva's semen,
for he alone will best him in battle.

Heed my words and execute a plan 1
that will succeed, with that god's help.
Sati, who left her body at Daksha's rite,
has been born in Himalaya's house
and done asceticism to win Shiva as husband, 2
yet he sits in samadhi, indifferent to all.
Although it is quite incongruous,
still, listen to this idea of mine—
send love god Kama to Shiva 3
to stir up his mind.
Then I will go bow before Shiva
and persuade him to get married.
Only thus may the gods' welfare be assured." 4
Everyone agreed it was an excellent idea.
Then the gods uttered earnest praise
and he of the five arrows and fish flag* appeared.

* Kama, god of love and lust, who is also called Mara.

८३ सुरन्ह कही निज बिपति सब सुनि मन कीन्ह बिचार।
संभु बिरोध न कुसल मोहि बिहसि कहेउ अस मार॥

१ तदपि करब मैं काजु तुम्हारा।
श्रुति कह परम धरम उपकारा॥
पर हित लागि तजइ जो देही।
संतत संत प्रसंसहिं तेहि॥
२ अस कहि चलेउ सबहि सिरु नाई।
सुमन धनुष कर सहित सहाई॥
चलत मार अस हृदयँ बिचारा।
सिव बिरोध ध्रुव मरनु हमारा॥
३ तब आपन प्रभाउ बिस्तारा।
निज बस कीन्ह सकल संसारा॥
कोपेउ जबहिं बारिचरकेतू।
छन महुँ मिटे सकल श्रुति सेतु॥
४ ब्रह्मचर्ज ब्रत संजम नाना।
धीरज धरम ग्यान बिग्याना॥
सदाचार जप जोग बिरागा।
सभय बिबेक कटकु सबु भागा॥

५ भागेउ बिबेकु सहाय सहित
सो सुभट संजुग महि मुरे।
सदग्रंथ पर्बत कंदरन्हि महुँ
जाइ तेहि अवसर दुरे॥

He listened thoughtfully as the gods 83
recounted their woes.
Then Mara said with a laugh, "Crossing Shambhu
will not be good for me,

yet I will carry out your task. 1
The Veda calls service supreme dharma,
and one who gives up his life for another
is forever praised by the holy."
So saying, he bowed to all and left, 2
flower-bow in hand and joined by his helpers.[22]
As he went, Mara mused to himself,
"Crossing Shiva is sure death for me!"
Then he caused his power to expand, 3
bringing all creation under his sway.
When the fish-bannered god was aroused,
all Vedic restraints vanished in an instant.
Celibacy, fasting, every kind of abstinence, 4
patience, dharma, learning, and wisdom,
morality, meditation, yoga, and detachment—
the forces of discrimination fled in terror.

Discrimination and his aides ran off, his stalwarts 5
turned tail and fled the field,
hiding out in caves in the mountains
of the holy scriptures.

होनिहार का करतार को
रखवार जग खरभरु परा।
दुइ माथ केहि रतिनाथ जेहि कहुँ
कोपि कर धनु सरु धरा॥

८४ जे सजीव जग अचर चर नारि पुरुष अस नाम।
ते निज निज मरजाद तजि भए सकल बस काम॥

१ सब के हृदयँ मदन अभिलाषा।
लता निहारि नवहिं तरु साखा॥
नदीं उमगि अंबुधि कहुँ धाईं।
संगम करहिं तलाव तलाईं॥
२ जहँ असि दसा जड़न्ह कै बरनी।
को कहि सकइ सचेतन करनी॥
पसु पच्छी नभ जल थल चारी।
भए काम बस समय बिसारी॥
३ मदन अंध ब्याकुल सब लोका।
निसि दिनु नहिं अवलोकहिं कोका॥
देव दनुज नर किंनर ब्याला।
प्रेत पिसाच भूत बेताला॥
४ इन्ह कै दसा न कहेउँ बखानी।
सदा काम के चेरे जानी॥
सिद्ध बिरक्त महामुनि जोगी।
तेपि कामबस भए बियोगी॥

An uproar filled the cosmos: "Oh God, what is happening?
Who will protect us?
Who is the reckless one against whom Rati's lord*
has angrily taken up bow and arrows?"[23]

All the world's beings, moving and still, 84
who were designated male and female,
abandoned their respective restraints
and were overcome by passion.

Their hearts all began craving sexual pleasure— 1
tree limbs bent toward comely creepers,
rivers rose and ran to the sea,
big and small ponds mingled their waters.[24]
If such was the state of the insentient, 2
who can tell of the doings of conscious beings?
Beasts and birds of the sky, waters, and earth
all became lust-smitten, mindless of season.
The world was blinded by frenzied desire, 3
and red geese did not distinguish day from night.[25]
As for gods and demons, humans, demigods, snakes,
ghosts, goblins, and vampires,
their state cannot even be described, 4
for they are known as eternal slaves to lust.
Even adepts and ascetics, great sages and yogis,
overcome by desire, languished in separation.[26]

* Kama.

५ भए कामबस जोगीस तापस
पावँरन्हि की को कहै।
देखहिं चराचर नारिमय जे
ब्रह्ममय देखत रहे॥
अबला बिलोकहिं पुरुषमय जगु
पुरुष सब अबलामयं।
दुइ दंड भरि ब्रह्मांड भीतर
कामकृत कौतुक अयं॥

८५ धरी न काहूँ धीर सब के मन मनसिज हरे।
जे राखे रघुबीर ते उबरे तेहि काल महुँ॥

१ उभय घरी अस कौतुक भयऊ।
जौ लगि कामु संभु पहिं गयऊ॥
सिवहि बिलोकि ससंकेउ मारू।
भयउ जथाथिति सबु संसारू॥
२ भए तुरत सब जीव सुखारे।
जिमि मद उतरि गएँ मतवारे॥
रुद्रहि देखि मदन भय माना।
दुराधरष दुर्गम भगवाना॥
३ फिरत लाज कछु करि नहिं जाई।
मरनु ठानि मन रचेसि उपाई॥
प्रगटेसि तुरत रुचिर रितुराजा।
कुसुमित नव तरु राजि बिराजा॥

Great yogis and ascetics became prey to lust, 5
so who can tell of what befell lowly humans?
Those who had seen the cosmos pervaded by God
now saw it filled with women!
Women perceived the world swarming with men,
men saw everything as female.
For nearly a full hour,[27] the spectacle
produced by Kama suffused the universe.

No one held to forbearance, for the mind-born god 85
had conquered every mind.
Only those whom the Raghu hero protected
remained safe during that time.

For nearly an hour the farce continued, 1
as Kama approached Lord Shambhu.
But seeing Shiva, Mara felt alarm,
and the world went back to normal.
At once, all beings got relief, 2
like drunkards becoming sober.
Looking at Rudra, the charmer was afraid—
that unconquerable, unassailable god!
To turn back was disgrace, yet what could he do? 3
Resolving to die, he conceived a strategy.
Instantly he invoked spring, king of seasons,
and rows of young trees burst into bloom.

४ बन उपबन बापिका तड़ागा।
परम सुभग सब दिसा बिभागा॥
जहँ तहँ जनु उमगत अनुरागा।
देखि मुएहुँ मन मनसिज जागा॥

५ जागइ मनोभव मुएहुँ मन बन
सुभगता न परै कही।
सीतल सुगंध सुमंद मारुत
मदन अनल सखा सही॥
बिकसे सरन्हि बहु कंज गुंजत
पुंज मंजुल मधुकरा।
कलहंस पिक सुक सरस रव करि
गान नाचहिं अपछरा॥

८६ सकल कला करि कोटि बिधि हारेउ सेन समेत।
चली न अचल समाधि सिव कोपेउ हृदयनिकेत॥

१ देखि रसाल बिटप बर साखा।
तेहि पर चढ़ेउ मदनु मन माखा॥
सुमन चाप निज सर संधाने।
अति रिस ताकि श्रवन लगि ताने॥
२ छाड़े बिषम बिसिख उर लागे।
छूटि समाधि संभु तब जागे॥

Forests and bowers, stepwells and ponds— 4
every place became surpassingly beautiful.
Passion seemed to well up everywhere,
a sight to arouse desire even in the dead.

Mind-born love awoke even in dead minds 5
at the indescribable beauty of the forest,
fanned by a cool, gentle, fragrant breeze—
that best friend of the enchanter's fire.
Masses of lotuses bloomed on the lakes,
clouds of honeybees buzzed,
and geese, cuckoos, and parrots cried melodiously
as celestial women sang and danced.

Yet with all his arts and a billion ruses, 86
Love and his legions were defeated.
Shiva did not stir from his unshakable samadhi,
and so Kama grew furious.

Spying a mango tree's fair branch, 1
he climbed it, heart enraged.
Setting flower arrows on his bow,
he angrily aimed, drew the string to his ear,
and sent five sharp darts to Shiva's breast. 2
His trance disturbed, Shambhu was aroused.

भयउ ईस मन छोभु बिसेषी।
नयन उघारि सकल दिसि देखी॥
३ सौरभ पल्लव मदनु बिलोका।
भयउ कोपु कंपेउ त्रैलोका॥
तब सिवँ तीसर नयन उघारा।
चितवत कामु भयउ जरि छारा॥
४ हाहाकार भयउ जग भारी।
डरपे सुर भए असुर सुखारी॥
समुझि कामसुख सोचहिं भोगी।
भए अकंटक साधक जोगी॥

५ जोगी अकंटक भए पति गति
सुनत रति मुरुछित भई।
रोदति बदति बहु भाँति करुना
करति संकर पहिं गई॥
अति प्रेम करि बिनती बिबिध बिधि
जोरि कर सन्मुख रही।
प्रभु आसुतोष कृपाल सिव
अबला निरखि बोले सही॥

८७ अब तें रति तव नाथ कर होइहि नामु अनंगु।
बिनु बपु ब्यापिहि सबहि पुनि सुनु निज मिलन
प्रसंगु॥

Sensing strange agitation in his mind, the lord
opened his eyes and looked in all directions.
When he saw Love among the mango leaves, 3
he grew angry, and the three worlds trembled.
Then Shiva uncovered his third eye
and at its mere glance, Kama was burnt to ashes.
A tumult of lamentation filled the cosmos. 4
The gods were frightened, their foes pleased.
Sensualists mourned remembered pleasures,
but seekers and yogis found their path free at last.

Yogis were freed of obstacles, but when Rati 5
heard of her husband's fate, she fainted.
Weeping and lamenting piteously,
she made her way to Lord Shankar.
She stood before him, palms joined in supplication,
and lovingly entreated him.
Seeing that poor woman, merciful Lord Shiva,
who is easily placated, spoke thus—

"Henceforth, Rati, your husband 87
will be named 'Bodiless,' and though
without form, will be all-pervading.
Now hear how you will meet him again.

१ जब जदुबंस कृष्न अवतारा।
होइहि हरन महा महिभारा॥
कृष्न तनय होइहि पति तोरा।
बचनु अन्यथा होइ न मोरा॥
२ रति गवनी सुनि संकर बानी।
कथा अपर अब कहउँ बखानी॥
देवन्ह समाचार सब पाए।
ब्रह्मादिक बैकुंठ सिधाए॥
३ सब सुर बिष्नु बिरंचि समेता।
गए जहाँ सिव कृपानिकेता॥
पृथक पृथक तिन्ह कीन्हि प्रसंसा।
भए प्रसन्न चंद्र अवतंसा॥
४ बोले कृपासिंधु बृषकेतू।
कहहु अमर आए केहि हेतू॥
कह बिधि तुम्ह प्रभु अंतरजामी।
तदपि भगति बस बिनवउँ स्वामी॥

८८ सकल सुरन्ह के हृदयँ अस संकर परम उछाहु।
निज नयनन्हि देखा चहहिं नाथ तुम्हार बिबाहु॥

१ यह उत्सव देखिअ भरि लोचन।
सोइ कछु करहु मदन मद मोचन॥
कामु जारि रति कहुँ बरु दीन्हा।
कृपासिंधु यह अति भल कीन्हा॥

When Krishna incarnates in the Yadu clan 1
to remove earth's awful burden,
your lord will become Krishna's son.
My words will not prove false."
Hearing what Shiva said, Rati returned. 2
Now I narrate another story—
when the gods received this news,
they proceeded with Brahma to Vaikunth.
Then, along with Vishnu and Brahma, 3
they went to Shiva, storehouse of mercy.
In diverse ways they sang his praise,
and the moon-crowned one was pleased.
That bull-bannered sea of compassion said, 4
"Immortals, tell me why you have come."
Brahma replied, "Lord, you are omniscient,
yet by devotion's protocol, I petition you.

Shankar, in the hearts of all the gods 88
there is great eagerness
and longing, lord, to see with their own eyes
your marriage rite.

Arrange that we may feast our eyes 1
on this spectacle, crusher of Love's pride.
You immolated Kama, then gave a boon to Rati—
all this was rightly done, most gracious one.

२ सासति करि पुनि करहिं पसाऊ।
नाथ प्रभुन्ह कर सहज सुभाऊ॥
पारबतीं तपु कीन्ह अपारा।
करहु तासु अब अंगीकारा॥
३ सुनि बिधि बिनय समुझि प्रभु बानी।
ऐसेइ होउ कहा सुखु मानी॥
तब देवन्ह दुंदुभीं बजाईं।
बरषि सुमन जय जय सुर साईं॥
४ अवसरु जानि सप्तरिषि आए।
तुरतहिं बिधि गिरिभवन पठाए॥
प्रथम गए जहँ रहीं भवानी।
बोले मधुर बचन छल सानी॥

८९ कहा हमार न सुनेहु तब नारद कें उपदेस।
अब भा झूठ तुम्हार पन जारेउ कामु महेस॥

१ सुनि बोलीं मुसुकाइ भवानी।
उचित कहेहु मुनिबर बिग्यानी॥
तुम्हरें जान कामु अब जारा।
अब लगि संभु रहे सबिकारा॥
२ हमरें जान सदा सिव जोगी।
अज अनवद्य अकाम अभोगी॥
जौं मैं सिव सेये अस जानी।
प्रीति समेत कर्म मन बानी॥

To punish and then show mercy 2
is the very nature of mighty masters.
But Parvati has performed endless mortification,
so now, accept her as your own."
Hearing the creator's plea, recalling Ram's words, 3
Shiva gladly said, "It will be so."
Then the gods sounded kettledrums
and threw flowers, hailing him as lord of gods.
Knowing it was time, the seven seers came, 4
and Brahma dispatched them to Himalaya's home.
But first they went to where Bhavani stayed,
and spoke sweet yet deceitful words.

"You would not heed us then, 89
trusting in Narad's instruction.
Now your vow is proven false, for Mahesh
has immolated Love himself!"

Bhavani listened, smiled, and said, 1
"You speak rightly, wise sages,
supposing that Shambhu has just burned Kama,
and was imperfect until now!
But I know Shiva as an eternal yogi, 2
unborn, perfect, passionless, without desire.
And if, knowing this, I have worshiped him
with love, in action, thought, and word,

३ तौ हमार पन सुनहु मुनीसा।
करिहहिं सत्य कृपानिधि ईसा॥
तुम्ह जो कहा हर जारेउ मारा।
सोइ अति बड़ अबिबेकु तुम्हारा॥
४ तात अनल कर सहज सुभाऊ।
हिम तेहि निकट जाइ नहिं काऊ॥
गएँ समीप सो अवसि नसाई।
असि मन्मथ महेस की नाई॥

१० हियँ हरषे मुनि बचन सुनि देखि प्रीति बिस्वास।
चले भवानिहि नाइ सिर गए हिमाचल पास॥

१ सबु प्रसंगु गिरिपतिहि सुनावा।
मदन दहन सुनि अति दुखु पावा॥
बहुरि कहेउ रति कर बरदाना।
सुनि हिमवंत बहुत सुखु माना॥
२ हृदयँ बिचारि संभु प्रभुताई।
सादर मुनिबर लिए बोलाई॥
सुदिनु सुनखतु सुघरी सोचाई।
बेगि बेदबिधि लगन धराई॥
३ पत्री सप्तरिषिन्ह सोइ दीन्ही।
गहि पद बिनय हिमाचल कीन्ही॥
जाइ बिधिहि तिन्ह दीन्हि सो पाती।
बाचत प्रीति न हृदयँ समाती॥

then—listen, lords of sages!—my vow 3
will be fulfilled by that most merciful lord.
What you say—that Hara burned Kama—
shows your great misperception.
Elders, due to fire's innate nature, 4
ice never dares approach it,
for coming near, it would be destroyed.
So it was with that churner of hearts and Mahesh."

Hearing her words, perceiving her love and faith, 90
the sages were overjoyed.
Bowing their heads to Bhavani,
they left her and went to Lord Himalaya.

They told the mountain king everything. 1
Hearing of Kama's immolation, he grieved,
but when they recounted Rati's boon,
the abode of snows was delighted.
Musing in his heart on Shiva's glory, 2
he respectfully summoned renowned sages
to calculate a good day, conjunction,[28] and time
and quickly set an auspicious wedding date.
Himalaya gave a letter[29] to the seven seers, 3
and touched their feet, humbly petitioning them.
They delivered it to Brahma,
whose heart overflowed with love as he read it.

४ लगन बाचि अज सबहि सुनाई।
हरषे मुनि सब सुर समुदाई॥
सुमन बृष्टि नभ बाजन बाजे।
मंगल कलस दसहुँ दिसि साजे॥

९१ लगे सँवारन सकल सुर बाहन बिबिध बिमान।
होहिं सगुन मंगल सुभद करहिं अपछरा गान॥

१ सिवहि संभु गन करहिं सिंगारा।
जटा मुकुट अहि मौरु सँवारा॥
कुंडल कंकन पहिरे ब्याला।
तन बिभूति पट केहरि छाला॥
२ ससि ललाट सुंदर सिर गंगा।
नयन तीनि उपबीत भुजंगा॥
गरल कंठ उर नर सिर माला।
असिव बेष सिवधाम कृपाला॥
३ कर त्रिसूल अरु डमरु बिराजा।
चले बसहँ चढ़ि बाजहिं बाजा॥
देखि सिवहि सुरत्रिय मुसुकाहीं।
बर लायक दुलहिनि जग नाहीं॥
४ बिष्नु बिरंचि आदि सुरब्राता।
चढ़ि चढ़ि बाहन चले बराता॥
सुर समाज सब भाँति अनूपा।
नहिं बरात दूलह अनुरूपा॥

The unborn one announced the invitation to all, 4
and the hosts of gods and sages rejoiced.
Flowers rained from the sky, instruments blared,
and the ten directions were adorned with holy waterpots.[30]

All the gods prepared their various chariots 91
and mounts,
as auspicious omens appeared
and celestial courtesans sang.

Shiva's minions saw to his grooming, 1
topping his matted locks with a serpent crown.
Snakes formed his earrings and bracelets,
his ash-smeared body was girded with lionskin,
with moon on his brow, Ganga in his hair, 2
three eyes, braided snakes for sacred thread,
poison-blue throat, and garland of human heads—
in gruesome garb, but an abode of blessing and mercy!
With trident and *ḍamarū*-drum[31] in his hands, 3
he mounted his bull to the blare of instruments.
Looking at Shiva, the gods' wives tittered,
"No bride in the world merits this groom!"
Vishnu, Brahma, and all the divine hosts 4
mounted vehicles to form the wedding party—
an incomparable heavenly cavalcade
that hardly suited the bridegroom.

१२ बिष्नु कहा अस बिहसि तब बोलि सकल दिसिराज।
बिलग बिलग होइ चलहु सब निज निज सहित
समाज॥

१ बर अनुहारि बरात न भाई।
हँसी करैहहु पर पुर जाई॥
बिष्नु बचन सुनि सुर मुसुकाने।
निज निज सेन सहित बिलगाने॥
२ मनहीं मन महेसु मुसुकाहीं।
हरि के बिंग्य बचन नहिं जाहीं॥
अति प्रिय बचन सुनत प्रिय केरे।
भृंगिहि प्रेरि सकल गन टेरे॥
३ सिव अनुसासन सुनि सब आए।
प्रभु पद जलज सीस तिन्ह नाए॥
नाना बाहन नाना बेषा।
बिहसे सिव समाज निज देखा॥
४ कोउ मुख हीन बिपुल मुख काहू।
बिनु पद कर कोउ बहु पद बाहू॥
बिपुल नयन कोउ नयन बिहीना।
रिष्टपुष्ट कोउ अति तनखीना॥

Vishnu smiled, and summoned the lords 92
of the quadrants—
"Let us all proceed separately,
with our respective hosts.

Brothers, our wedding party ill fits the groom, 1
and they will mock us in towns along the way."
The gods laughed at Vishnu's words,
and each went with his entourage.
Smiling to himself, Mahesh thought, 2
"Hari can never resist a jest!"[32]
Well pleased by his dear friend's words,
he sent Bhringi* to round up his minions.
At Shiva's order, they all came 3
and bowed at their lord's lovely feet.
Seeing the countless mounts and costumes
of his entourage made Shiva chuckle.
Some were headless or multiheaded, 4
some lacked hands and feet, others had many,
some were many-eyed, some eyeless,
some hale and plump, others emaciated.

* One of Shiva's attendants.

५ तन खीन कोउ अति पीन पावन
कोउ अपावन गति धरें।
भूषन कराल कपाल कर सब
सद्य सोनित तन भरें॥
खर स्वान सुअर सृकाल मुख गन
बेष अगनित को गनै।
बहु जिनस प्रेत पिसाच जोगि
जमात बरनत नहिं बनै॥

९३ नाचहिं गावहिं गीत परम तरंगी भूत सब।
देखत अति बिपरीत बोलहिं बचन बिचित्र बिधि॥

१ जस दूलहु तसि बनी बराता।
कौतुक बिबिध होहिं मग जाता॥
इहाँ हिमाचल रचेउ बिताना।
अति बिचित्र नहिं जाइ बखाना॥
२ सैल सकल जहँ लगि जग माहीं।
लघु बिसाल नहिं बरनि सिराहीं॥
बन सागर सब नदीं तलावा।
हिमगिरि सब कहुँ नेवत पठावा॥
३ कामरूप सुंदर तन धारी।
सहित समाज सहित बर नारी॥
गए सकल तुहिनाचल गेहा।
गावहिं मंगल सहित सनेहा॥

Some had shriveled bodies, others were obese, 5
and they wore holy or impure garb,
with gruesome ornaments, skulls in hand,
and limbs smeared with fresh blood,
with heads of asses and dogs, pigs and jackals,
those minions had millions of guises
and there were troops of ghosts, goblins,
and yogis, too, impossible to describe.

All those riotously playful spirits were dancing 93
and singing songs,
looking utterly appalling
and making the weirdest sounds.

As was the groom, so his entourage, 1
and it marched with wild merrymaking.
Meanwhile, Himalaya raised a wedding tent
of amazing, unutterable beauty.
To every mountain in the world, 2
small or large, beyond counting,
and all forests, seas, rivers, and lakes,
the king of snows sent invitations.
Assuming beautiful bodies at will, 3
with their entourage and lovely wives,
all went to the abode of snows,
lovingly singing songs of blessing.

४ प्रथमहिं गिरि बहु गृह सँवराए।
जथाजोगु तहँ तहँ सब छाए॥
पुर सोभा अवलोकि सुहाई।
लागइ लघु बिरंचि निपुनाई॥

५ लघु लाग बिधि की निपुनता
अवलोकि पुर सोभा सही।
बन बाग कूप तड़ाग सरिता
सुभग सब सक को कही॥
मंगल बिपुल तोरन पताका
केतु गृह गृह सोहहीं।
बनिता पुरुष सुंदर चतुर छबि
देखि मुनि मन मोहहीं॥

९४ जगदंबा जहँ अवतरी सो पुरु बरनि कि जाइ।
रिद्धि सिद्धि संपत्ति सुख नित नूतन अधिकाइ॥

१ नगर निकट बरात सुनि आई।
पुर खरभरु सोभा अधिकाई॥
करि बनाव सजि बाहन नाना।
चले लेन सादर अगवाना॥
२ हियँ हरषे सुर सेन निहारी।
हरिहि देखि अति भए सुखारी॥

The mountain king had prepared many dwellings 4
in which they settled, according to their rank.
When they beheld the beauty of his city,
the handiwork of the world-creator seemed trifling.

Brahma's ingenuity seemed slight to them 5
when they saw the splendor of the city,
with groves, gardens, wells, and watercourses,
all of a beauty none can describe.
Every home was resplendent
with festive gateways, pennants, and banners,
and the grace and sophistication of the citizens
captivated even the minds of ascetics.

The city where the cosmic mother became incarnate— 94
can it ever be described?
There success, spiritual fulfillment, wealth,
and joy forever flourished.

News of the wedding party's approach 1
caused tumult in the city, and yet more splendor.
Lavishly decorating countless vehicles,
a dignified reception party[33] went forth.
Their hearts thrilled at the sight of the divine host, 2
and they were overjoyed to see Lord Hari.

सिव समाज जब देखन लागे।
बिडरि चले बाहन सब भागे॥
३ धरि धीरजु तहँ रहे सयाने।
बालक सब लै जीव पराने॥
गएँ भवन पूछहिं पितु माता।
कहहिं बचन भय कंपित गाता॥
४ कहिअ काह कहि जाइ न बाता।
जम कर धार किधौं बरिआता॥
बरु बौराह बसहँ असवारा।
ब्याल कपाल बिभूषन छारा॥

५ तन छार ब्याल कपाल भूषन
नगन जटिल भयंकरा।
सँग भूत प्रेत पिसाच जोगिनि
बिकट मुख रजनीचरा॥
जो जिअत रहिहि बरात देखत
पुन्य बड़ तेहि कर सही।
देखिहि सो उमा बिबाहु घर घर
बात असि लरिकन्ह कही॥

९५ समुझि महेस समाज सब जननि जनक मुसुकाहिं।
बाल बुझाए बिबिध बिधि निडर होहु डरु नाहिं॥

But when they got a glimpse of Shiva's escort,
their mounts bolted in terror.
The elders braced themselves and stayed, 3
but the boys all fled for their lives.
Back at home, their parents questioned them,
and they answered, shaking with fear:
"What can we say? It's indescribable! 4
Is this a wedding party or the army of death?
The groom is a madman, astride a bull,
adorned with snakes, skulls, and ashes.

Ash-smeared, bedecked with snakes and skulls, naked, 5
with matted hair—he is frightful.
With him are ghastly-faced ghosts, goblins, *joginīs*,[34]
and night-roaming demons.
Anyone who escapes with his life after seeing
this wedding party is lucky indeed
and is welcome to watch Uma's wedding!"
So the boys reported in every home.

Knowing it was great Shiva's entourage, 95
their mothers and fathers smiled,
and patiently soothed their children:
"Don't be afraid, there's nothing to fear."

१ लै अगवान बरातहि आए।
दिए सबहि जनवास सुहाए॥
मैनाँ सुभ आरती सँवारी।
संग सुमंगल गावहिं नारी॥
२ कंचन थार सोह बर पानी।
परिछन चली हरहि हरषानी॥
बिकट बेष रुद्रहि जब देखा।
अबलन्ह उर भय भयउ बिसेषा॥
३ भागि भवन पैठीं अति त्रासा।
गए महेसु जहाँ जनवासा॥
मैना हृदयँ भयउ दुखु भारी।
लीन्ही बोलि गिरीसकुमारी॥
४ अधिक सनेहँ गोद बैठारी।
स्याम सरोज नयन भरे बारी॥
जेहिं बिधि तुम्हहि रूपु अस दीन्हा।
तेहिं जड़ बरु बाउर कस कीन्हा॥

५ कस कीन्ह बरु बौराह बिधि
जेहिं तुम्हहि सुंदरता दई।
जो फलु चहिअ सुरतरुहिं सो
बरबस बबूरहिं लागई॥

The greeters escorted the wedding party 1
and settled them in fine quarters.
Maina arranged an auspicious tray,[35]
and with other women, sang songs of blessing.
Bearing gold platters in lovely hands, 2
they went joyously to greet Lord Hara.
But when they saw Rudra's awful guise,
the women's hearts were filled with dread.
They fled into their homes in terror 3
as Mahesh proceeded to the bridegroom's camp.
Mother Maina, her heart deeply troubled,
sent for the daughter of the mountain.
She embraced her, overcome by love, 4
tears filling her lotus-blue eyes.
"The creator made you so beautiful,
so how did that fool make a madman for your groom?

How could the creator who gave you such loveliness 5
fashion a lunatic bridegroom?
A fruit that belongs on the tree of heaven
will be thrust into a thorny bush!

तुम्ह सहित गिरि तें गिरौं पावक
जरौं जलनिधि महुँ परौं।
घरु जाउ अपजसु होउ जग
जीवत बिबाहु न हौं करौं॥

९६ भईं बिकल अबला सकल दुखित देखि गिरिनारि।
करि बिलापु रोदति बदति सुता सनेहु सँभारि॥

१ नारद कर मैं काह बिगारा।
भवनु मोर जिन्ह बसत उजारा॥
अस उपदेसु उमहि जिन्ह दीन्हा।
बौरे बरहि लागि तपु कीन्हा॥
२ साचेहुँ उन्ह कें मोह न माया।
उदासीन धनु धामु न जाया॥
पर घर घालक लाज न भीरा।
बाँझ कि जान प्रसव कै पीरा॥
३ जननिहि बिकल बिलोकि भवानी।
बोली जुत बिबेक मृदु बानी॥
अस बिचारि सोचहि मति माता।
सो न टरइ जो रचइ बिधाता॥
४ करम लिखा जौं बाउर नाहू।
तौ कत दोसु लगाइअ काहू॥
तुम्ह सन मिटहिं कि बिधि के अंका।
मातु ब्यर्थ जनि लेहु कलंका॥

You and I will leap from a cliff, enter an inferno,
or plunge into the sea.
Let our house be disgraced in the world,
but while I live I will not allow this wedding!"

Seeing the grief of the mountain's wife, 96
all the women grew distraught,
while she sobbed and lamented,
feeling deep love for her daughter.

"What did I ever do to Narad 1
to make him wreck my happy home,
giving such guidance to my Uma
that she tortured herself to get a crazy groom?
That sage is beyond delusion, all right— 2
an ascetic with no wealth, home, or wife,
but shameless and brazen in wrecking others' houses.
Can a barren woman know the pain of childbirth?"
Seeing her mother's anguish, Bhavani 3
sweetly spoke words of wisdom.
"Mother, reflect on this, and do not fret—
what the creator ordains cannot be avoided.
If an insane spouse is written in my karma, 4
then who is to be blamed?
Can you erase the lines of destiny?
Mother, do not uselessly expose yourself to shame.

५ जनि लेहु मातु कलंकु करुना
परिहरहु अवसर नहीं।
दुखु सुखु जो लिखा लिलार हमरें
जाब जहँ पाउब तहीं॥
सुनि उमा बचन बिनीत कोमल
सकल अबला सोचहीं।
बहु भाँति बिधिहि लगाइ दूषन
नयन बारि बिमोचहीं॥

९७ तेहि अवसर नारद सहित अरु रिषि सप्त समेत।
समाचार सुनि तुहिनगिरि गवने तुरत निकेत॥

१ तब नारद सबही समुझावा।
पूरुब कथाप्रसंगु सुनावा॥
मयना सत्य सुनहु मम बानी।
जगदंबा तव सुता भवानी॥
२ अजा अनादि सक्ति अबिनासिनि।
सदा संभु अरधंग निवासिनि॥
जग संभव पालन लय कारिनि।
निज इच्छा लीला बपु धारिनि॥
३ जनमीं प्रथम दच्छ गृह जाई।
नामु सती सुंदर तनु पाई॥
तहँहुँ सती संकरहि बिबाहीं।
कथा प्रसिद्ध सकल जग माहीं॥

Do not expose yourself to shame, Mother! 5
Put away your pity, for it is not the time.
The happiness or sorrow inscribed on my brow
I will find wherever I go."
Hearing Uma's gentle entreaty, all the women
were greatly distressed
and wept as they blamed the creator time and again.

Just then, accompanied by Narad 97
and the seven seers,
the lord of the snows, having heard the news,
quickly entered the house.

But Narad brought everyone consolation 1
by telling tales of past lives.
"Listen, Maina, what I say is the truth:
Your daughter is Bhavani, mother of the world!
Unborn and beginningless, indestructible *śakti,* 2
who eternally shares half of Shambhu's form.
Creator, nurturer, destroyer of the cosmos,
voluntarily and in play she assumes a body.
In the past, she was born in Daksha's house, 3
bearing the name 'Sati' and a lovely form.
There, too, she was wed to Shankar—
that story is known to all the world.

४ एक बार आवत सिव संगा।
देखेउ रघुकुल कमल पतंगा॥
भयउ मोहु सिव कहा न कीन्हा।
भ्रम बस बेषु सीय कर लीन्हा॥

५ सिय बेषु सतीं जो कीन्ह तेहिं
अपराध संकर परिहरीं।
हर बिरहँ जाइ बहोरि पितु कें
जग्य जोगानल जरीं॥
अब जनमि तुम्हरे भवन निज पति
लागि दारुन तपु किया।
अस जानि संसय तजहु गिरिजा
सर्बदा संकरप्रिया॥

९८ सुनि नारद के बचन तब सब कर मिटा बिषाद।
छन महुँ ब्यापेउ सकल पुर घर घर यह संबाद॥

१ तब मयना हिमवंतु अनंदे।
पुनि पुनि पारबती पद बंदे॥
नारि पुरुष सिसु जुबा सयाने।
नगर लोग सब अति हरषाने॥
२ लगे होन पुर मंगल गाना।
सजे सबहिं हाटक घट नाना॥

Once, traveling with Shiva, 4
she saw the sun that nurtures the lotus of the Raghus.[*]
She grew confused, ignored Shiva's warning,
and, deluded, took on the guise of Sita.

Sati, who took on the guise of Sita, was abandoned 5
by Shankar for that transgression.
Pained by separation, she went to her father's sacrifice
and was consumed in yogic fire.
Now reborn in your home, she has done
harsh penance for her husband's sake.
Give up your doubts, knowing that
the mountain's daughter is Shankar's eternal love!

When they heard Narad's words, 98
everyone's sorrow was eased,
and the news spread instantly
to every home in the city.

Then Maina and Himalaya joyfully 1
bowed again and again at Parvati's feet.
Women and men, children, youth, elders—
all the townspeople were elated.
Songs of celebration filled the city 2
as everyone readied offering vessels of gold.

* Ram.

भाँति अनेक भई जेवनारा।
सूपसास्त्र जस कछु ब्यवहारा॥
३ सो जेवनार कि जाइ बखानी।
बसहिं भवन जेहिं मातु भवानी॥
सादर बोले सकल बराती।
बिष्नु बिरंचि देव सब जाती॥
४ बिबिधि पाँति बैठी जेवनारा।
लागे परुसन निपुन सुआरा॥
नारिबृंद सुर जेवँत जानी।
लगीं देन गारीं मृदु बानी॥

५ गारीं मधुर स्वर देहिं सुंदरि
बिंग्य बचन सुनावहीं।
भोजनु करहिं सुर अति बिलंबु
बिनोदु सुनि सचु पावहीं॥
जेवँत जो बढ़्यो अनंदु सो मुख
कोटिहूँ न परै कह्यो।
अचवाँइ दीन्हें पान गवने
बास जहँ जाको रह्यो॥

९९ बहुरि मुनिन्ह हिमवंत कहुँ लगन सुनाई आइ।
समय बिलोकि बिबाह कर पठए देव बोलाइ॥

A many-course banquet was prepared
following the rules of culinary treatises.
How can that feast be described, 3
made in the home of Bhavani, creation's mother?
The groom's party was respectfully summoned:
Vishnu, Brahma, all the clans of immortals.
They sat down to dine in myriad lines, 4
and skilled cooks started serving them.
Knowing the gods were feasting, bevies of women
began sweetly singing ribald songs.[36]

In sweet voices, those beauties rendered songs 5
of abuse, replete with satire,
and hearing themselves teased,
the delighted gods lingered over their meal.
Not a million tongues could tell
of the overflowing bliss of that banquet!
When all had sipped water, *pān* was served,[37]
then each retired to his lodgings.

Soon, sages came to inform Himalaya 99
of an auspicious conjunction of planets.
Realizing the wedding hour was at hand,
he sent for the gods.

१ बोलि सकल सुर सादर लीन्हे।
सबहि जथोचित आसन दीन्हे॥
बेदी बेद बिधान सँवारी।
सुभग सुमंगल गावहिं नारी॥
२ सिंघासनु अति दिब्य सुहावा।
जाइ न बरनि बिरंचि बनावा॥
बैठे सिव बिप्रन्ह सिरु नाई।
हृदयँ सुमिरि निज प्रभु रघुराई॥
३ बहुरि मुनीसन्ह उमा बोलाईं।
करि सिंगारु सखीं लै आईं॥
देखत रूपु सकल सुर मोहे।
बरनै छबि अस जग कबि को है॥
४ जगदंबिका जानि भव भामा।
सुरन्ह मनहिं मन कीन्ह प्रनामा॥
सुंदरता मरजाद भवानी।
जाइ न कोटिहुँ बदन बखानी॥

५ कोटिहुँ बदन नहिं बनै बरनत
जग जननि सोभा महा।
सकुचहिं कहत श्रुति सेष सारद
मंदमति तुलसी कहा॥

All the gods were respectfully escorted 1
and given fine seats, according to rank.
The altar was adorned as the Veda prescribes,
and women sang lovely songs of blessing.
On a regal seat of surpassing splendor, 2
indescribable and crafted by Brahma himself,
Shiva sat, bowing his head to the Brahmans
and inwardly calling to mind his lord, Ram.
Then the sages sent for Uma, 3
who was brought, gorgeously adorned, by her friends.
The sight of her form captivated the gods.
What poet in this world could describe such beauty?
Knowing her as cosmic mother, Shiva's consort, 4
the celestials silently venerated her.
The absolute zenith of beauty, Bhavani
cannot be described by a billion tongues.

Not a billion tongues could tell the immense splendor 5
of the mother of the world.
The Vedas, Shesh, and Sharada shrink from the task,
so what of dull-witted Tulsi?

छबिखानि मातु भवानि गवनीं
मध्य मंडप सिव जहाँ।
अवलोकि सकहिं न सकुच पति पद
कमल मनु मधुकरु तहाँ॥

१०० मुनि अनुसासन गनपतिहि पूजेउ संभु भवानि।
कोउ सुनि संसय करै जनि सुर अनादि जियँ जानि॥

१ जसि बिबाह कै बिधि श्रुति गाई।
महामुनिन्ह सो सब करवाई॥
गहि गिरीस कुस कन्या पानी।
भवहि समरपीं जानि भवानी॥
२ पानिग्रहन जब कीन्ह महेसा।
हियँ हरषे तब सकल सुरेसा॥
बेदमंत्र मुनिबर उच्चरहीं।
जय जय जय संकर सुर करहीं॥
३ बाजहिं बाजन बिबिध बिधाना।
सुमनबृष्टि नभ भै बिधि नाना॥
हर गिरिजा कर भयउ बिबाहू।
सकल भुवन भरि रहा उछाहू॥
४ दासीं दास तुरग रथ नागा।
धेनु बसन मनि बस्तु बिभागा॥
अन्न कनकभाजन भरि जाना।
दाइज दीन्ह न जाइ बरखाना॥

A treasury of beauty, Bhavani reached the center
of the pavilion, where Shiva sat.
Though too shy herself to look at her lord's lotus feet,
her heart's honeybee flew there.

Directed by the sages, Shambhu and Bhavani 100
worshiped Lord Ganesh.
Let no one puzzle over this, knowing
that the gods are without beginning.[38]

All rites of marriage prescribed in the Veda 1
were diligently performed by great sages.
Holding *kuśa* grass[39] and his daughter's hand,
Himalaya willingly gave Bhavani to Bhava.
When Mahesh took her hand 2
the lords of heaven rejoiced at heart.
As the sages chanted Vedic mantras,
the gods cried, "Victory, victory to Shankar!"
A cacophony of instruments rang out 3
and the sky rained streams of flowers.
The marriage of Hara with the mountain's daughter
thrilled the whole universe.
Manservants and maids, horses, chariots, 4
cows, clothing, gems, and gifts of all sorts,
grain, and golden dishes were loaded on carts,
in a dowry that defies description.

५ दाइज दियो बहु भाँति पुनि कर
जोरि हिमभूधर कह्यो ।
का देउँ पूरनकाम संकर
चरन पंकज गहि रह्यो ॥
सिवँ कृपासागर ससुर कर
संतोषु सब भाँतिहिं कियो ।
पुनि गहे पद पाथोज मयनाँ
प्रेम परिपूरन हियो ॥

१०१ नाथ उमा मम प्रान सम गृहकिंकरी करेहु ।
छमेहु सकल अपराध अब होइ प्रसन्न बरु देहु ॥

१ बहु बिधि संभु सासु समुझाई ।
गवनी भवन चरन सिरु नाई ॥
जननीं उमा बोलि तब लीन्ही ।
लै उछंग सुंदर सिख दीन्ही ॥
२ करेहु सदा संकर पद पूजा ।
नारिधरमु पति देउ न दूजा ॥
बचन कहत भरे लोचन बारी ।
बहुरि लाइ उर लीन्हि कुमारी ॥
३ कत बिधि सृजीं नारि जग माहीं ।
पराधीन सपनेहुँ सुखु नाहीं ॥
भै अति प्रेम बिकल महतारी ।
धीरजु कीन्ह कुसमय बिचारी ॥

A bountiful dowry was given, 5
and the lord of snows said in supplication,
"What can I offer you, all-sufficient Shankar?"
as he touched those blessed feet.
Shiva, ocean of mercy, gratified
his father-in-law in diverse ways.
Then Maina, her heart overflowing with love,
clasped his feet and said,

"Lord, Uma is my very life breath! 101
Make her your own servant,
but be pleased to grant this boon—
that you forgive all her failings!"

Shambhu greatly comforted his mother-in-law, 1
and she bowed at his feet and went home.
Then Maina sent for her daughter, Uma,
embraced her and offered sound advice:
"Be constant in worship of Shankar's feet, 2
for in women's dharma, a husband alone is god."
As she spoke, tears welled up in her eyes
and she clutched the maiden to her breast.
"Oh why did Brahma make women in this world— 3
always subservient[40] and deprived of happiness?"
Though overwhelmed by love, her mother
composed herself, mindful of the moment.

४ पुनि पुनि मिलति परति गहि चरना।
परम प्रेमु कछु जाइ न बरना॥
सब नारिन्ह मिलि भेटि भवानी।
जाइ जननि उर पुनि लपटानी॥

५ जननिहि बहुरि मिलि चली उचित
असीस सब काहूँ दईं।
फिरि फिरि बिलोकति मातु तन
तब सखीं लै सिव पहिं गईं॥
जाचक सकल संतोषि संकरु
उमा सहित भवन चले।
सब अमर हरषे सुमन बरषि
निसान नभ बाजे भले॥

१०२ चले संग हिमवंतु तब पहुँचावन अति हेतु।
बिबिध भाँति परितोषु करि बिदा कीन्ह बृषकेतु॥

१ तुरत भवन आए गिरिराई।
सकल सैल सर लिए बोलाई॥
आदर दान बिनय बहुमाना।
सब कर बिदा कीन्ह हिमवाना॥
२ जबहिं संभु कैलासहिं आए।
सुर सब निज निज लोक सिधाए॥

Hugging her time and again, she fell at her feet 4
with a love too great for words to describe.
Together the women embraced Bhavani,
who clung again to her mother's breast.

Once more she hugged the one who gave her birth 5
as the women offered blessings.
As her friends led her back to Shiva, she turned
time and again to look at her mother.
Shankar, after satisfying all supplicants,[41]
left with Uma for his abode,
as the immortals rejoiced, raining down blossoms
and sounding celestial drums.

Himalaya accompanied them for a time, 102
displaying his deep affection,
till, with much courtesy, the lord
with a bull on his banner took his leave.

The mountain king hurried homeward, 1
and summoned all the peaks and ponds.
Humbly honoring them with many gifts
Lord Himalaya bid them all farewell.
When Shambhu went to Mount Kailash, 2
the gods dispersed to their own realms.

जगत मातु पितु संभु भवानी।
तेहिं सिंगारु न कहउँ बखानी॥
३ करहिं बिबिध बिधि भोग बिलासा।
गनन्ह समेत बसहिं कैलासा॥
हर गिरिजा बिहार नित नयऊ।
एहि बिधि बिपुल काल चलि गयऊ॥
४ तब जनमेउ षटबदन कुमारा।
तारकु असुरु समर जेहिं मारा॥
आगम निगम प्रसिद्ध पुराना।
षन्मुख जन्मु सकल जग जाना॥

५ जगु जान षन्मुख जन्मु कर्मु
प्रतापु पुरुषारथु महा।
तेहि हेतु मैं बृषकेतु सुत कर
चरित संछेपहिं कहा॥
यह उमा संभु बिबाहु जे नर
नारि कहहिं जे गावहीं।
कल्यान काज बिबाह मंगल
सर्बदा सुखु पावहीं॥

१०३ चरित सिंधु गिरिजा रमन बेद न पावहिं पारु।
बरनै तुलसीदासु किमि अति मतिमंद गवाँरु॥

Shiva and Bhavani are the world's father and mother
and I refrain from describing their love-play.
But they engaged in all sorts of erotic pleasures 3
as they lived on Kailash with Shiva's servants.
Hara's lovemaking with Himalaya's daughter
was ever-new, and a very long time passed.
Then their six-headed son was born,[42] 4
who would slay the demon Tarak in battle.
Famed in Veda, sacred treatises, and lore,
the six-faced god's birth is known to all the world.

The whole world knows of the six-faced one's birth, 5
deeds, valor, and great purpose,
and so I have spoken but briefly of the acts
of that son of the bull-bannered lord.
Men and women who sing or recite this saga
of the wedding of Uma and Shambhu
will forever find happiness in marriage
and other beneficent acts.

The deeds of Parvati's lover are an ocean 103
even the Vedas cannot cross.
How, then, can Tulsi, utter dunce
and rustic, narrate them?

Causes of Ram's Incarnation

१ संभु चरित सुनि सरस सुहावा ।
भरद्वाज मुनि अति सुखु पावा ॥
बहु लालसा कथा पर बाढ़ी ।
नयनन्हि नीरु रोमावलि ठाढ़ी ॥
२ प्रेम बिबस मुख आव न बानी ।
दसा देखि हरषे मुनि ग्यानी ॥
अहो धन्य तव जन्मु मुनीसा ।
तुम्हहि प्रान सम प्रिय गौरीसा ॥
३ सिव पद कमल जिन्हहि रति नाहीं ।
रामहि ते सपनेहुँ न सोहाहीं ॥
बिनु छल बिस्वनाथ पद नेहू ।
राम भगत कर लच्छन एहू ॥
४ सिव सम को रघुपति ब्रतधारी ।
बिनु अघ तजी सती असि नारी ॥
पनु करि रघुपति भगति देखाई ।
को सिव सम रामहि प्रिय भाई ॥

१०४ प्रथमहिं मैं कहि सिव चरित बूझा मरमु तुम्हार ।
सुचि सेवक तुम्ह राम के रहित समस्त बिकार ॥

१ मैं जाना तुम्हार गुन सीला ।
कहउँ सुनहु अब रघुपति लीला ॥
सुनु मुनि आजु समागम तोरें ।
कहि न जाइ जस सुखु मन मोरें ॥

Hearing Shambhu's noble, charming acts 1
gave sage Bharadvaj supreme joy,
and he yearned for the story to continue,
with tears in his eyes and limbs trembling.
Overcome by love, he could not say a word. 2
Seeing his state, his wise teacher rejoiced.
"Blessed is your birth, great sage,
For Gauri's lord is dear as life to you.
One who does not adore Shiva's pure feet 3
can never be pleasing to Ram.
Guileless love for Vishvanath, lord of the world,[1]
is the true sign of a devotee of Ram.
Who but Shiva is so avowed to the Raghu lord 4
that he could forsake a sinless woman like Sati,
and fulfilling his promise, demonstrate devotion?
Who is dearer to Ram than Shiva, brother?

I first recounted the saga of Shiva 104
to gauge your depth,
and truly, you are a flawless servant of Ram,
free of all sins.

I have come to know your merits, so now, 1
listen as I tell of the divine play[2] of the Raghu lord.
Sage, our meeting today
gives my heart unspeakable joy.

२ राम चरित अति अमित मुनीसा।
कहि न सकहिं सत कोटि अहीसा॥
तदपि जथाश्रुत कहउँ बखानी।
सुमिरि गिरापति प्रभु धनुपानी॥
३ सारद दारुनारि सम स्वामी।
रामु सूत्रधर अंतरजामी॥
जेहि पर कृपा करहिं जनु जानी।
कबि उर अजिर नचावहिं बानी॥
४ प्रनवउँ सोइ कृपाल रघुनाथा।
बरनउँ बिसद तासु गुन गाथा॥
परम रम्य गिरिबरु कैलासू।
सदा जहाँ सिव उमा निवासू॥

१०५ सिद्ध तपोधन जोगिजन सुर किंनर मुनिबृंद।
बसहिं तहाँ सुकृती सकल सेवहिं सिव सुखकंद॥

१ हरि हर बिमुख धर्म रति नाहीं।
ते नर तहँ सपनेहुँ नहिं जाहीं॥
तेहि गिरि पर बट बिटप बिसाला।
नित नूतन सुंदर सब काला॥
२ त्रिबिध समीर सुसीतलि छाया।
सिव बिश्राम बिटप श्रुति गाया॥
एक बार तेहि तर प्रभु गयऊ।
तरु बिलोकि उर अति सुखु भयऊ॥

Ram's deeds are so limitless, lord of sages, 2
even ten billion divine serpents cannot tell them.
Yet I will narrate what I have heard,
remembering that bowman,* who is lady Speech's lord.
For Sharada is as a wooden puppet, controlled 3
by Ram, the inner knower, holding her strings.
When he blesses a poet, knowing his devotion,
he makes her dance in the courtyard of his heart.
I venerate that merciful Raghu lord 4
and sing the saga of his flawless virtues.
Kailash, best and most pleasing of mountains,
is the eternal abode of Shiva and Uma.

Perfected adepts and great ascetics, yogis, gods, 105
demigods, and bands of sages
reside there, all piously serving Shiva,
the very source of delight.

Anyone averse to Hari and Hara, lacking love of dharma, 1
can never even dream of reaching that place.
On that peak is a great banyan tree,
ever fresh and lovely in all seasons.
A threefold breeze[3] fans the cool shade 2
of that tree where Shiva reposes, as scripture says.
One day, the lord came to the tree,
and beholding it, felt great joy.

* Ram.

३ निज कर डासि नागरिपु छाला।
बैठे सहजहिं संभु कृपाला॥
कुंद इंदु दर गौर सरीरा।
भुज प्रलंब परिधन मुनिचीरा॥
४ तरुन अरुन अंबुज सम चरना।
नख दुति भगत हृदय तम हरना॥
भुजग भूति भूषन त्रिपुरारी।
आननु सरद चंद छबि हारी॥

१०६ जटा मुकुट सुरसरित सिर लोचन नलिन बिसाल।
नीलकंठ लावन्यनिधि सोह बालबिधु भाल॥

१ बैठे सोह कामरिपु कैसें।
धरें सरीरु सांतरसु जैसें॥
पारबती भल अवसरु जानी।
गईं संभु पहिं मातु भवानी॥
२ जानि प्रिया आदरु अति कीन्हा।
बाम भाग आसनु हर दीन्हा॥
बैठीं सिव समीप हरषाई।
पूरुब जन्म कथा चित आई॥
३ पति हियँ हेतु अधिक अनुमानी।
बिहसि उमा बोलीं प्रिय बानी॥
कथा जो सकल लोक हितकारी।
सोइ पूछन चह सैलकुमारी॥

Spreading a tigerskin with his own hand, 3
merciful Shambhu gracefully seated himself,
his body white as jasmine, moon, or conch,
with long arms, waist wrapped in bark cloth,
feet like newly opened red lotuses, 4
their sparkling nails dispelling the dark of devotees'
hearts,
adorned with snakes and ashes, the triple cities' foe,
whose face steals the luster of the autumn moon.

Crowned with matted locks and Ganga, river of heaven, 106
with great dark eyes,
blue throat, and crescent moon on his brow,
he is a treasury of beauty.

Kama's enemy sat with such grace, 1
as though peace itself had taken form.
Parvati, knowing the time was suitable,
went to him—the world's mother, Bhavani.
Respectfully acknowledging his dear wife, 2
Hara showed her a seat at his left side.
As she sat happily near Shiva,
she recalled the events of her former birth.
Confident of greater love in her lord's heart, 3
Uma smiled and spoke sweetly,
for it was the tale that blesses all the world
that the mountain's daughter wanted to request.

४ बिस्वनाथ मम नाथ पुरारी।
त्रिभुवन महिमा बिदित तुम्हारी॥
चर अरु अचर नाग नर देवा।
सकल करहिं पद पंकज सेवा॥

१०७ प्रभु समरथ सर्बग्य सिव सकल कला गुन धाम।
जोग ग्यान बैराग्य निधि प्रनत कलपतरु नाम॥

१ जौं मो पर प्रसन्न सुखरासी।
जानिअ सत्य मोहि निज दासी॥
तौ प्रभु हरहु मोर अग्याना।
कहि रघुनाथ कथा बिधि नाना॥
२ जासु भवनु सुरतरु तर होई।
सहि कि दरिद्र जनित दुखु सोई॥
ससिभूषन अस हृदयँ बिचारी।
हरहु नाथ मम मति भ्रम भारी॥
३ प्रभु जे मुनि परमारथबादी।
कहहिं राम कहुँ ब्रह्म अनादी॥
सेस सारदा बेद पुराना।
सकल करहिं रघुपति गुन गाना॥
४ तुम्ह पुनि राम राम दिन राती।
सादर जपहु अनँग आराती॥
रामु सो अवध नृपति सुत सोई।
की अज अगुन अलखगति कोई॥

"Purari, lord of the universe and my lord, 4
your glory is famed in all three worlds.
Animate and inanimate, snakes, humans, gods—
all beings worship your lovely feet.

Ever-auspicious Shiva, almighty, omniscient lord, 107
abode of beauty, virtue, yoga,
wisdom, and detachment—your name
is a wish-granting tree for humble devotees.

Blissful one, if you are pleased with me, 1
and truly reckon me your maidservant,
then, lord, remove my ignorance
by telling Lord Raghu's epic story.
One who dwells under the wish-giving tree 2
should not suffer the sorrow of poverty.
Reflect on this, you who are adorned with the moon,
and remove my mind's deep delusion.
Lord, sages who teach the supreme reality 3
say that Ram is beginningless *brahma,*
and Shesh, Sharada, Vedas, and sacred lore
all chant the glories of Lord Raghu.
You too, day and night, repeat 'Ram, Ram' 4
with reverence, foe of the bodiless god.
But is that Ram the son of Avadh's king,
or someone else—unborn, imperceptible, attributeless?

१०८ जौं नृप तनय त ब्रह्म किमि नारि बिरहँ मति भोरि।
देखि चरित महिमा सुनत भ्रमति बुद्धि अति मोरि॥

१ जौं अनीह ब्यापक बिभु कोऊ।
कहहु बुझाइ नाथ मोहि सोऊ॥
अग्य जानि रिस उर जनि धरहू।
जेहि बिधि मोह मिटै सोइ करहू॥
२ मैं बन दीखि राम प्रभुताई।
अति भय बिकल न तुम्हहि सुनाई॥
तदपि मलिन मन बोधु न आवा।
सो फलु भली भाँति हम पावा॥
३ अजहूँ कछु संसउ मन मोरें।
करहु कृपा बिनवउँ कर जोरें॥
प्रभु तब मोहि बहु भाँति प्रबोधा।
नाथ सो समुझि करहु जनि क्रोधा॥
४ तब कर अस बिमोह अब नाहीं।
रामकथा पर रुचि मन माहीं॥
कहहु पुनीत राम गुन गाथा।
भुजगराज भूषन सुरनाथा॥

१०९ बंदउँ पद धरि धरनि सिरु बिनय करउँ कर जोरि।
बरनहु रघुबर बिसद जसु श्रुति सिद्धांत निचोरि॥

If but a prince, who lost his mind when he lost his woman, 108
how, then, is he *brahma*?
Having seen his actions and then heard his praise,
my mind is utterly confused.

If desireless, infinite, almighty Ram is some other, 1
then, lord, explain this to me.
Do not be annoyed by my ignorance,
but strive to remove my delusion.
I glimpsed Ram's divinity in that forest, 2
but was too frightened to speak of it to you.
Yet my dull wit stayed unenlightened
and I reaped its fruit in full measure.
Even now my mind harbors doubts 3
and I humbly beg for your mercy.
You instructed me then, lord, at length—
recalling this, do not be angry, husband.
My ignorance is not as it was then, 4
and my heart longs to hear Ram's story.
So tell the holy saga of his virtues,
lord of gods, wearer of the serpent king!

I lay my head on the earth, worshiping your feet, 109
and reverently beseech you:
extract the Veda's essence and expound the spotless fame
of the greatest of Raghus.

१ जदपि जोषिता नहिं अधिकारी।
दासी मन क्रम बचन तुम्हारी॥
गूढ़उ तत्त्व न साधु दुरावहिं।
आरत अधिकारी जहँ पावहिं॥
२ अति आरति पूछउँ सुरराया।
रघुपति कथा कहहु करि दाया॥
प्रथम सो कारन कहहु बिचारी।
निर्गुन ब्रह्म सगुन बपु धारी॥
३ पुनि प्रभु कहहु राम अवतारा।
बालचरित पुनि कहहु उदारा॥
कहहु जथा जानकी बिबाहीं।
राज तजा सो दूषन काहीं॥
४ बन बसि कीन्हे चरित अपारा।
कहहु नाथ जिमि रावन मारा॥
राज बैठि कीन्हीं बहु लीला।
सकल कहहु संकर सुखसीला॥

११० बहुरि कहहु करुनायतन कीन्ह जो अचरज राम।
प्रजा सहित रघुबंसमनि किमि गवने निज धाम॥

१ पुनि प्रभु कहहु सो तत्त्व बखानी।
जेहिं बिग्यान मगन मुनि ग्यानी॥
भगति ग्यान बिग्यान बिरागा।
पुनि सब बरनहु सहित बिभागा॥

Though a woman, and not entitled to this,[4] 1
I am your servant in thought, deed, and word,
and the holy do not hide profound truths
when they meet someone desperate and deserving.
So I fervently implore you, king of gods, 2
to be merciful, and tell the Raghu lord's tale.
First, reflect on and tell the reason why
the formless absolute took embodied form.
Then, lord, tell of Ram's descent 3
and of his many childhood exploits.
Tell how he came to wed Janaki,
and for what fault he renounced his throne.
Tell of his deeds while living in the forest, 4
lord, and tell how he slew Ravan,
and of his many pastimes when enthroned.
Blissful Shankar, tell me all of this.

And then, abode of compassion, tell of 110
the astonishing deed Ram performed—
how that jewel of Raghus, with all his subjects,
left for his eternal realm.[5]

Then, lord, expound that esoteric lore 1
in which great sages are absorbed.
Devotion, knowledge, wisdom, detachment—
describe these, in all their aspects.

२ औरउ राम रहस्य अनेका।
कहहु नाथ अति बिमल बिबेका॥
जो प्रभु मैं पूछा नहिं होई।
सोउ दयाल राखहु जनि गोई॥
३ तुम्ह त्रिभुवन गुर बेद बखाना।
आन जीव पाँवर का जाना॥
प्रस्न उमा कै सहज सुहाई।
छल बिहीन सुनि सिव मन भाई॥
४ हर हियँ रामचरित सब आए।
प्रेम पुलक लोचन जल छाए॥
श्रीरघुनाथ रूप उर आवा।
परमानंद अमित सुख पावा॥

१११ मगन ध्यान रस दंड जुग पुनि मन बाहेर कीन्ह।
रघुपति चरित महेस तब हरषित बरनै लीन्ह॥

१ झूठेउ सत्य जाहि बिनु जानें।
जिमि भुजंग बिनु रजु पहिचानें॥
जेहि जानें जग जाइ हेराई।
जागें जथा सपन भ्रम जाई॥
२ बंदउँ बालरूप सोइ रामू।
सब सिधि सुलभ जपत जिसु नामू॥
मंगल भवन अमंगल हारी।
द्रवउ सो दसरथ अजिर बिहारी॥

And the many other secrets of Ram 2
tell me, too, most discerning master.
And even that, lord, of which I have not asked,
merciful one, do not keep it hidden!
The Veda calls you the three worlds' guru. 3
Other wretched souls—what do they know?"
Hearing Uma's questions, effortlessly artful
and guileless, gave Shiva deep satisfaction.
The whole saga of Ram came into Hara's heart 4
and he shivered with love, tears filling his eyes.
The image of the Raghu lord entered his heart
and he found the infinite joy of divine bliss.[6]

For an hour, he was sunk in blissful contemplation, 111
then he drew his mind outward
and great lord Shiva happily began to relate
the deeds of the Raghu king.

"He—without knowledge of whom the false 1
seems true, like a rope mistaken for a snake,[7]
and knowledge of whom makes the world vanish,
like the illusion of a dream on waking—
I worship that very Ram, in child-form, 2
by repeating whose name all powers[8] are easily attained,
abode of blessing, remover of ill omen—
may he who plays in Dasarath's courtyard be merciful."[9]

३ करि प्रनाम रामहि त्रिपुरारी।
हरषि सुधा सम गिरा उचारी॥
धन्य धन्य गिरिराजकुमारी।
तुम्ह समान नहिं कोउ उपकारी॥
४ पूँछेहु रघुपति कथा प्रसंगा।
सकल लोक जग पावनि गंगा॥
तुम्ह रघुबीर चरन अनुरागी।
कीन्हिहु प्रस्न जगत हित लागी॥

११२ राम कृपा तें पारबति सपनेहुँ तव मन माहिं।
सोक मोह संदेह भ्रम मम बिचार कछु नाहिं॥

१ तदपि असंका कीन्हिहु सोई।
कहत सुनत सब कर हित होई॥
जिन्ह हरिकथा सुनी नहिं काना।
श्रवन रंध्र अहिभवन समाना॥
२ नयनन्हि संत दरस नहिं देखा।
लोचन मोरपंख कर लेखा॥
ते सिर कटु तुंबरि समतूला।
जे न नमत हरि गुर पद मूला॥
३ जिन्ह हरिभगति हृदयँ नहिं आनी।
जीवत सव समान तेइ प्रानी॥
जो नहिं करइ राम गुन गाना।
जीह सो दादुर जीह समाना॥

Saluting Ram, the foe of the triple cities 3
spoke with delight, in a voice like nectar:
"Blessed are you, daughter of the mountain,
blessed, and a benefactor like no other,
for you ask for the story of the Raghu lord, 4
the Ganga that sanctifies all the worlds.
Fervently devoted to the Raghu hero's feet,
you pose your questions for the world's sake.

By Ram's grace, Parvati, your mind 112
could not possibly contain
any sorrow, delusion, doubt, or fallacy—
so I firmly believe.

Yet you have expressed that very doubt, 1
telling and hearing of which will benefit all.
Those who have not listened to Hari's tale
have ears no better than snakes' holes.
Those who have not gazed at holy ones 2
have eyes like peacocks' tail marks.
Those heads are like bitter gourds
that do not bow at the feet of God and guru.
And if their hearts have no devotion to Hari, 3
beings are but animated corpses.
If it does not chant Ram's praise,
a human tongue is no better than a frog's,

४ कुलिस कठोर निठुर सोइ छाती।
सुनि हरिचरित न जो हरषाती॥
गिरिजा सुनहु राम कै लीला।
सुर हित दनुज बिमोहनसीला॥

११३ रामकथा सुरधेनु सम सेवत सब सुख दानि।
सतसमाज सुरलोक सब को न सुनै अस जानि॥

१ रामकथा सुंदर कर तारी।
संसय बिहग उड़ावनिहारी॥
रामकथा कलि बिटप कुठारी।
सादर सुनु गिरिराजकुमारी॥
२ राम नाम गुन चरित सुहाए।
जनम करम अगनित श्रुति गाए॥
जथा अनंत राम भगवाना।
तथा कथा कीरति गुन नाना॥
३ तदपि जथा श्रुत जसि मति मोरी।
कहिहउँ देखि प्रीति अति तोरी॥
उमा प्रस्न तव सहज सुहाई।
सुखद संतसंमत मोहि भाई॥
४ एक बात नहिं मोहि सोहानी।
जदपि मोह बस कहेहु भवानी॥
तुम्ह जो कहा राम कोउ आना।
जेहि श्रुति गाव धरहिं मुनि ध्याना॥

and hard as adamant is the heart of one 4
who does not delight in hearing Hari's deeds.
So listen, Girija, to the playful acts of Ram,
that bless gods and delude demons.

Ram's tale is like the divine wish-granting cow 113
whose service yields all delights,
and the company of the holy equals all heavens.
Who, knowing this, would not listen?

Ram's saga is a resounding hand clap 1
dispelling the birds of doubt.
Ram's tale is an axe to the Kali age's tree,
so listen with reverence, mountain's daughter.
Ram's lovely names, virtues, stories, 2
births, and deeds are countless—so the Veda chants.
For just as infinite as Ram, the supreme God,
are his story, glory, and fame.
Still, as I have heard, and according to my ability, 3
I will tell it, perceiving your great eagerness.
Your question, Uma, was inherently good,
agreeable to the holy and pleasing to me.
Yet there was one thing I did not like, 4
though you said it in ignorance, Bhavani—
when you asked, 'Is it some other Ram
whom Veda extols and sages contemplate?'

११४ कहहिं सुनहिं अस अधम नर ग्रसे जे मोह पिसाच ।
पाषंडी हरि पद बिमुख जानहिं झूठ न साच ॥

१ अग्य अकोबिद अंध अभागी ।
काई बिषय मुकुर मन लागी ॥
लंपट कपटी कुटिल बिसेषी ।
सपनेहुँ संतसभा नहिं देखी ॥
२ कहहिं ते बेद असंमत बानी ।
जिन्ह कें सूझ लाभु नहिं हानी ॥
मुकुर मलिन अरु नयन बिहीना ।
राम रूप देखहिं किमि दीना ॥
३ जिन्ह कें अगुन न सगुन बिबेका ।
जल्पहिं कल्पित बचन अनेका ॥
हरिमाया बस जगत भ्रमाहीं ।
तिन्हहि कहत कछु अघटित नाहीं ॥
४ बातुल भूत बिबस मतवारे ।
ते नहिं बोलहिं बचन बिचारे ॥
जिन्ह कृत महामोह मद पाना ।
तिन्ह कर कहा करिअ नहिं काना ॥

११५ अस निज हृदयँ बिचारि तजु संसय भजु राम पद ।
सुनु गिरिराज कुमारि भ्रम तम रबि कर बचन मम ॥

Those who speak and hear such words are vile, 114
seized by the goblin of error,
hypocrites averse to Hari's feet,
who cannot tell truth from falsehood.

Ignorant, blind, luckless fools, 1
their mind-mirrors rusted by sensuality,
wanton, duplicitous, thoroughly perverse,
and who never dream of visiting saintly ones—
they alone speak like this, at odds with the Veda, 2
who have no inkling of true gain or loss.
Their mirrors tarnished, lacking eyes,
how can such wretches see Ram's real form?
Unable to discern God, with or without attributes, 3
they babble countless concocted teachings.
Driven by Hari's maya, they wander the world
and there is nothing they will not say.
The mad, possessed, and intoxicated 4
do not think before they speak,
and to those who have drunk delusion's liquor
one should never lend an ear.

Reflect on this in your heart, banish doubt, 115
and adore Ram's feet.
Hear me, mountain's daughter—my speech is a sunbeam
for the shadow of error.

१ सगुनहि अगुनहि नहिं कछु भेदा।
गावहिं मुनि पुरान बुध बेदा॥
अगुन अरूप अलख अज जोई।
भगत प्रेम बस सगुन सो होई॥
२ जो गुन रहित सगुन सोइ कैसें।
जलु हिम उपल बिलग नहिं जैसें॥
जासु नाम भ्रम तिमिर पतंगा।
तेहि किमि कहिअ बिमोह प्रसंगा॥
३ राम सच्चिदानंद दिनेसा।
नहिं तहँ मोह निसा लवलेसा॥
सहज प्रकासरूप भगवाना।
नहिं तहँ पुनि बिग्यान बिहाना॥
४ हरष बिषाद ग्यान अग्याना।
जीव धर्म अहमिति अभिमाना॥
राम ब्रह्म ब्यापक जग जाना।
परमानंद परेस पुराना॥

११६ पुरुष प्रसिद्ध प्रकास निधि प्रगट परावर नाथ।
रघुकुलमनि मम स्वामि सोइ कहि सिवँ नायउ माथ॥

१ निज भ्रम नहिं समुझहिं अग्यानी।
प्रभु पर मोह धरहिं जड़ प्रानी॥
जथा गगन घन पटल निहारी।
झाँपेउ भानु कहहिं कुबिचारी॥

There is no difference in God, with or without attributes— 1
so sages, *purāṇas,* scholars, and Veda all declare.
That One, without attributes and form, invisible and
unborn,
acquires qualities by the power of devotees' love.
How can one without qualities also have them? 2
It is like the nondifference of water and ice.
He whose name is a sun to the darkness of delusion,
how can he be linked to ignorance?
Ram is the sun of being, consciousness, and bliss, 3
in whom there is no trace of delusion's night.
He is innate effulgence, supreme Lord,
in whom knowledge need never dawn.
Happiness, misery, knowledge, ignorance, 4
egoism, and pride are the lot of souls.
But the world knows Ram as all-pervading God,
ultimate bliss, almighty Lord, ancient one.

The celebrated primordial person, source of light, 116
the manifest, supreme Lord—
that jewel of the Raghus is my master."
Saying this, Shiva bowed his head.

"Ignorant, yet unaware of his error, 1
a dullard projects illusion on the Lord,
just as a fool will see the sky covered in clouds
and say the sun is hiding itself,

२ चितव जो लोचन अंगुलि लाएँ।
प्रगट जुगल ससि तेहि के भाएँ॥
उमा राम बिषइक अस मोहा।
नभ तम धूम धूरि जिमि सोहा॥
३ बिषय करन सुर जीव समेता।
सकल एक तें एक सचेता॥
सब कर परम प्रकासक जोई।
राम अनादि अवधपति सोई॥
४ जगत प्रकास्य प्रकासक रामू।
मायाधीस ग्यान गुन धामू॥
जासु सत्यता तें जड़ माया।
भास सत्य इव मोह सहाया॥

११७ रजत सीप महुँ भास जिमि जथा भानु कर बारि।
जदपि मृषा तिहुँ काल सोइ भ्रम न सकइ कोउ
टारि॥

१ एहि बिधि जग हरि आश्रित रहई।
जदपि असत्य देत दुख अहई॥
जौं सपनें सिर काटै कोई।
बिनु जागें न दूरि दुख होई॥
२ जासु कृपाँ अस भ्रम मिटि जाई।
गिरिजा सोइ कृपाल रघुराई॥

or one who pokes a finger in his eye 2
will suppose two moons have appeared.
Associating such delusions with Ram, Uma,
is like attributing darkness, smoke, or dust to the sky.
Sense objects, the senses, their deities, and souls 3
are successively and dependently conscious,[10]
but the supreme illuminator of them all
is Ram, the eternal, that very king of Avadh.
Light-source by whom the world is lit, Ram 4
is master of maya, abode of wisdom and virtue,
through whose existence dull, inert maya,
aided by ignorance, glimmers like reality.

Just as silver shimmers in an oyster shell, 117
and mirage-water in the sun's rays,
and, though forever false, such illusions
cannot be dispelled by anyone—

so the universe depends on Lord Hari, 1
and, though false, causes suffering.
If someone beheads himself in a dream,
his anguish will not end unless he wakes up.
The one whose grace eliminates such error, 2
Girija, is that merciful Raghu king.

आदि अंत कोउ जासु न पावा।
मति अनुमानि निगम अस गावा॥
३ बिनु पद चलइ सुनइ बिनु काना।
कर बिनु करम करइ बिधि नाना॥
आनन रहित सकल रस भोगी।
बिनु बानी बकता बड़ जोगी॥
४ तन बिनु परस नयन बिनु देखा।
ग्रहइ घ्रान बिनु बास असेषा॥
असि सब भाँति अलौकिक करनी।
महिमा जासु जाइ नहिं बरनी॥

११८ जेहि इमि गावहिं बेद बुध जाहि धरहिं मुनि ध्यान।
सोइ दसरथ सुत भगत हित कोसलपति भगवान॥

१ कासीं मरत जंतु अवलोकी।
जासु नाम बल करउँ बिसोकी॥
सोइ प्रभु मोर चराचर स्वामी।
रघुबर सब उर अंतरजामी॥
२ बिबसहुँ जासु नाम नर कहहीं।
जनम अनेक रचित अघ दहहीं॥
सादर सुमिरन जे नर करहीं।
भव बारिधि गोपद इव तरहीं॥
३ राम सो परमातमा भवानी।
तहँ भ्रम अति अबिहित तव बानी॥

No one can fathom his beginning or end;
using inference, scripture speaks of him thus:
'Without feet he walks, and hears without ears, 3
without hands he performs all kinds of acts,
without mouth savors all tastes,
and voiceless he speaks with great eloquence,
bodiless he touches, eyeless sees, 4
and without a nose perceives all scents.'[11]
His acts are so utterly transcendent
that his glory can never be described.

He of whom the Veda and the learned thus speak, 118
and on whom sages meditate,
is that son of Dasarath, benefactor of the faithful,
Kosala's king, and supreme Lord.

When I watch over those who die in Kashi, 1
it is by the power of his name that I free them.
He is my own Lord, master of all beings,
best of Raghus, inner knower of all hearts.
His name, uttered even in duress, 2
removes sins of countless lifetimes,
and reverently recalled, carries one over
the vast sea of rebirth like a cow's hoofprint.[12]
Ram is that supreme self, Bhavani, 3
and your calling him deluded was most improper.

अस संसय आनत उर माहीं।
ग्यान बिराग सकल गुन जाहीं॥
४ सुनि सिव के भ्रम भंजन बचना।
मिटि गै सब कुतरक कै रचना॥
भइ रघुपति पद प्रीति प्रतीती।
दारुन असंभावना बीती॥

११९ पुनि पुनि प्रभु पद कमल गहि जोरि पंकरुह पानि।
बोलीं गिरिजा बचन बर मनहुँ प्रेम रस सानि॥

१ ससि कर सम सुनि गिरा तुम्हारी।
मिटा मोह सरदातप भारी॥
तुम्ह कृपाल सबु संसउ हरेऊ।
राम स्वरूप जानि मोहि परेऊ॥
२ नाथ कृपाँ अब गयउ बिषादा।
सुखी भयउँ प्रभु चरन प्रसादा॥
अब मोहि आपनि किंकरि जानी।
जदपि सहज जड़ नारि अयानी॥
३ प्रथम जो मैं पूछा सोइ कहहू।
जौं मो पर प्रसन्न प्रभु अहहू॥
राम ब्रह्म चिनमय अबिनासी।
सर्ब रहित सब उर पुर बासी॥
४ नाथ धरेउ नरतनु केहि हेतू।
मोहि समुझाइ कहहु बृषकेतू॥

The moment such doubt enters the mind,
wisdom, detachment, and all merits flee."
Hearing Shiva's words, which annihilate error, 4
the whole edifice of her illogic fell away.
She found love and faith in the Raghu lord's feet,
and her awful, unthinkable doubt[13] was resolved.

Repeatedly clasping her lord's feet, 119
then joining her lovely palms in supplication,
the mountain's daughter spoke noble words
that seemed imbued with the essence of love.

"Hearing your moonbeam-like speech 1
relieves the scorching rays[14] of my confusion.
Merciful one, you have cleared up all my doubts,
and Ram's true reality has dawned on me.
By your kindness, lord, my dejection is gone 2
and by the grace of your feet I have become happy.
Now, taking me as your own maidservant,
although a dim-witted woman, ignorant by nature,
speak to the question I asked before, 3
if you are truly pleased with me, lord.
Ram is God, fully aware and imperishable,
independent, yet abiding in every heart's city.
Why, then, did he take human form? 4
Explain this to me, bull-bannered lord."

उमा बचन सुनि परम बिनीता।
रामकथा पर प्रीति पुनीता॥

१२०क हियँ हरषे कामारि तब संकर सहज सुजान।
बहु बिधि उमहि प्रसंसि पुनि बोले कृपानिधान॥

१२०ख सुनु सुभ कथा भवानि रामचरितमानस बिमल।
कहा भुसुंडि बखानि सुना बिहग नायक गरुड़॥

१२०ग सो संबाद उदार जेहि बिधि भा आगें कहब।
सुनहु राम अवतार चरित परम सुंदर अनघ॥

१२०घ हरि गुन नाम अपार कथा रूप अगनित अमित।
मैं निज मति अनुसार कहउँ उमा सादर सुनहु॥

१ सुनु गिरिजा हरिचरित सुहाए।
बिपुल बिसद निगमागम गाए॥
हरि अवतार हेतु जेहि होई।
इदमित्थं कहि जाइ न सोई॥

When he heard Uma's most humble speech
and perceived her pure love for Ram's story,

the enemy of Kama, innately wise Shankar, 120a
rejoiced in his heart,
and after greatly praising Uma,
the treasury of mercy spoke.

"Now listen, Bhavani, to this blessed story, 120b
the flawless *Rāmcaritmānas,*
that Bhushundi expounded as Garuda,
lord of birds, listened.[15]

How that glorious dialogue occurred, 120c
I will recount to you later.
Hear now of Ram's incarnation
and his most lovely, faultless acts.

Hari's attributes, names, narratives, and forms 120d
are countless and unlimited,
yet I will speak according to my understanding.
Listen reverently, Uma!

Girija, the beautiful deeds of Lord Hari, 1
vast and glorious, are sung by sacred texts,
and of the cause of his incarnation
one can never say, 'It is merely this.'

२ राम अतर्क्य बुद्धि मन बानी।
मत हमार अस सुनहि सयानी॥
तदपि संत मुनि बेद पुराना।
जस कछु कहहिं स्वमति अनुमाना॥
३ तस मैं सुमुखि सुनावउँ तोही।
समुझि परइ जस कारन मोही॥
जब जब होइ धरम कै हानी।
बाढ़हिं असुर अधम अभिमानी॥
४ करहिं अनीति जाइ नहिं बरनी।
सीदहिं बिप्र धेनु सुर धरनी॥
तब तब प्रभु धरि बिबिध सरीरा।
हरहिं कृपानिधि सज्जन पीरा॥

१२१ असुर मारि थापहिं सुरन्ह राखहिं निज श्रुति सेतु।
जग बिस्तारहिं बिसद जस राम जन्म कर हेतु॥

१ सोइ जस गाइ भगत भव तरहीं।
कृपासिंधु जन हित तनु धरहीं॥
राम जनम के हेतु अनेका।
परम बिचित्र एक तें एका॥
२ जनम एक दुइ कहउँ बखानी।
सावधान सुनु सुमति भवानी॥
द्वारपाल हरि के प्रिय दोऊ।
जय अरु बिजय जान सब कोऊ॥

Ram is beyond apprehension by intellect, mind, and 2
speech—
such is my view, wise one!
Yet as saints and sages, Veda and sacred lore
explain according to their understanding,
so, lovely one, I will recount to you 3
the cause such as I have grasped it.
Whenever there is decline of dharma,
and vile, arrogant demons multiply
to commit indescribable atrocities, 4
and Brahmans, cows, gods, and earth suffer,
then the Lord, assuming diverse forms,
mercifully relieves the pain of the righteous.

To slay demons and reestablish gods, to guard the dam 121
of the sacred word he himself revealed,
and to spread his spotless fame in the world—
such is the purpose of Ram's birth.

Singing his fame, devotees cross the sea of rebirth, 1
and the ocean of mercy takes form for their sake.
The causes of Ram's birth are many,
each one surpassingly marvelous.
I shall elaborate on a few incarnations— 2
listen attentively, wise Bhavani.
Hari had two beloved doorkeepers,
Jay and Vijay, as everyone knows.

३ बिप्र श्राप तें दूनउ भाई।
तामस असुर देह तिन्ह पाई॥
कनककसिपु अरु हाटकलोचन।
जगत बिदित सुरपति मद मोचन॥
४ बिजई समर बीर बिख्याता।
धरि बराह बपु एक निपाता॥
होइ नरहरि दूसर पुनि मारा।
जन प्रहलाद सुजस बिस्तारा॥

१२२ भए निसाचर जाइ तेइ महाबीर बलवान।
कुंभकरन रावन सुभट सुर बिजई जग जान॥

१ मुकुत न भए हते भगवाना।
तीनि जनम द्विज बचन प्रवाना॥
एक बार तिन्ह के हित लागी।
धरेउ सरीर भगत अनुरागी॥
२ कस्यप अदिति तहाँ पितु माता।
दसरथ कौसल्या बिख्याता॥
एक कलप एहि बिधि अवतारा।
चरित पवित्र किए संसारा॥
३ एक कलप सुर देखि दुखारे।
समर जलंधर सन सब हारे॥
संभु कीन्ह संग्राम अपारा।
दनुज महाबल मरइ न मारा॥

By a Brahman's curse, both brothers 3
assumed the wicked forms of demon lords,
Kanakakashipu, and Hiranyaksha,[16]
renowned for humbling Indra's pride,
and famed as triumphant warriors. 4
Taking form as a boar, Hari slew one,
then, as the man-lion, killed the other,
spreading the fame of his devotee, Prahlad.[17]

Those two were reborn as night-stalkers, 122
most daring and powerful,
the heroic Kumbhakaran and Ravan,
who defeated the gods, as everyone knows.

They were not liberated, though slain by God, 1
for the Brahman's curse held for three births.
So once more, for their sake,
he who loves his devotees took on a body.
Kashyap and Aditi[*] were his parents then, 2
renowned as Dasarath and Kausalya.
Thus, in one cosmic cycle,[18] he came down
and purified creation with his deeds.[19]
In another cycle, seeing the gods oppressed 3
and overthrown in battle by Jalandhar,[†]
Shambhu engaged in an awful fight,
yet his demonic foe could not be slain.

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* A divine sage and his wife.
† A demon king.

४ परम सती असुराधिप नारी।
तेहिं बल ताहि न जितहिं पुरारी॥

१२३ छल करि टारेउ तासु ब्रत प्रभु सुर कारज कीन्ह।
जब तेहिं जानेउ मरम तब श्राप कोप करि दीन्ह॥

१ तासु श्राप हरि दीन्ह प्रमाना।
कौतुकनिधि कृपाल भगवाना॥
तहाँ जलंधर रावन भयऊ।
रन हति राम परम पद दयऊ॥
२ एक जनम कर कारन एहा।
जेहि लगि राम धरी नरदेहा॥
प्रति अवतार कथा प्रभु केरी।
सुनु मुनि बरनी कबिन्ह घनेरी॥
३ नारद श्राप दीन्ह एक बारा।
कलप एक तेहि लगि अवतारा॥
गिरिजा चकित भईं सुनि बानी।
नारद बिष्नुभगत पुनि ग्यानी॥
४ कारन कवन श्राप मुनि दीन्हा।
का अपराध रमापति कीन्हा॥
यह प्रसंग मोहि कहहु पुरारी।
मुनि मन मोह आचरज भारी॥

For that king's wife was supremely faithful, 4
and thanks to her power, Shiva could not defeat him.

Deceitfully undoing her wifely vow, 123
the Lord did the gods' work,
and when she came to know the secret,
she angrily cursed him.[20]

Her curse was accepted by Hari, 1
our most playful and merciful God.
Jalandhar then became Ravan
and Ram slew him in battle and gave him the highest state.
This was the purpose of one birth, 2
for which Ram took on a human body.
The tale of each of the Lord's avatars
has been richly narrated by poets—listen to it, sage.*
Once Narad cursed him, too, 3
for which, in one cycle, he incarnated."
Hearing this, Parvati was amazed—
"Narad is Vishnu's votary, and very wise.
Why would the sage pronounce a curse? 4
What offense did Lakshmi's lord commit?
Tell me this episode, foe of the cities,
for a sage's delusion is most astonishing."

* Bharadvaj, being addressed by Yajnavalkya.

१२४क बोले बिहसि महेस तब ग्यानी मूढ़ न कोइ।
जेहि जस रघुपति करहिं जब सो तस तेहि छन होइ॥

१२४ख कहउँ राम गुन गाथ भरद्वाज सादर सुनहु।
भव भंजन रघुनाथ भजु तुलसी तजि मान मद॥

१ हिमगिरि गुहा एक अति पावनि।
बह समीप सुरसरी सुहावनि॥
आश्रम परम पुनीत सुहावा।
देखि देवरिषि मन अति भावा॥
२ निरखि सैल सरि बिपिन बिभागा।
भयउ रमापति पद अनुरागा॥
सुमिरत हरिहि श्राप गति बाधी।
सहज बिमल मन लागि समाधी॥
३ मुनि गति देखि सुरेस डेराना।
कामहि बोलि कीन्ह सनमाना॥
सहित सहाय जाहु मम हेतू।
चलेउ हरषि हियँ जलचरकेतू॥
४ सुनासीर मन महुँ असि त्रासा।
चहत देवरिषि मम पुर बासा॥
जे कामी लोलुप जग माहीं।
कुटिल काक इव सबहि डेराहीं॥

Then with a smile great Shiva said, 124a
"No one is wise, no one a fool.
Whatever the Raghu lord ordains for anyone,
just so one instantly becomes."

"Listen with reverence, Bharadvaj, as I tell 124b
the saga of Ram's noble deeds."
Lord Raghu ends rebirth. Praise him, Tulsi,
renouncing pride and arrogance.[21]

In the Himalayas was a sacred cave 1
near where the heavenly river flows.
Seeing that purest of ashrams,
the divine seer Narad rejoiced at heart.
The sight of mountains, river, and forest 2
aroused love for the feet of Lakshmi's lord.
Calling Hari to mind arrested his curse[22]
and his pure mind plunged into deep meditation.
The sage's state frightened the king of gods,[23] 3
so he summoned Kama and honored him,
saying, "Go with your helpers and assist me."
The fish-bannered god went off merrily.
Terror seized Indra's mind as he thought, 4
"The divine seer wants my city!"
The lustful and covetous in this world,
like crafty crows, are wary of everyone.

१२५ सूख हाड़ लै भाग सठ स्वान निरखि मृगराज।
छीनि लेइ जनि जान जड़ तिमि सुरपतिहि न लाज॥

१ तेहि आश्रमहिं मदन जब गयऊ।
निज मायाँ बसंत निरमयऊ॥
कुसुमित बिबिध बिटप बहुरंगा।
कूजहिं कोकिल गुंजहिं भृंगा॥
२ चली सुहावनि त्रिबिध बयारी।
काम कृसानु बढ़ावनिहारी॥
रंभादिक सुर नारि नबीना।
सकल असमसर कला प्रबीना॥
३ करहिं गान बहु तान तरंगा।
बहुबिधि क्रीड़हिं पानि पतंगा॥
देखि सहाय मदन हरषाना।
कीन्हेसि पुनि प्रपंच बिधि नाना॥
४ काम कला कछु मुनिहि न ब्यापी।
निज भयँ डरेउ मनोभव पापी॥
सीम कि चाँपि सकइ कोउ तासू।
बड़ रखवार रमापति जासू॥

१२६ सहित सहाय सभीत अति मानि हारि मन मैन।
गहेसि जाइ मुनि चरन तब कहि सुठि आरत बैन॥

As a wretched dog, eyeing a lion king, 125
runs away with a dried-up bone,
stupidly thinking, "He will snatch it!"—
such was the shameless king of the gods.

When the enchanter reached that ashram 1
he used his magic to manufacture spring.
Trees burst into colorful bloom
as cuckoos called and bees hummed.
A delightfully cool, scented breeze blew 2
to fan the flames of desire.
Rambha and other celestial courtesans,
skilled in the love god's arts,
sang all sorts of languid melodies 3
while playfully tossing a ball about.
Pleased by his aides, the intoxicator
redoubled his innumerable artifices.
Yet none of his tricks could touch the sage, 4
and that mind-born rogue feared for his safety.
For who can threaten the defenses of one
whose bodyguard is Lakshmi's lord?

Terrified, together with his helpers, 126
Love acknowledged utter defeat,
then went and fell at the sage's feet,
whining in pained submission.

१ भयउ न नारद मन कछु रोषा।
कहि प्रिय बचन काम परितोषा॥
नाइ चरन सिरु आयसु पाई।
गयउ मदन तब सहित सहाई॥
२ मुनि सुसीलता आपनि करनी।
सुरपति सभाँ जाइ सब बरनी॥
सुनि सब कें मन अचरजु आवा।
मुनिहि प्रसंसि हरिहि सिरु नावा॥
३ तब नारद गवने सिव पाहीं।
जिता काम अहमिति मन माहीं॥
मार चरित संकरहि सुनाए।
अतिप्रिय जानि महेस सिखाए॥
४ बार बार बिनवउँ मुनि तोही।
जिमि यह कथा सुनायहु मोही॥
तिमि जनि हरिहि सुनावहु कबहूँ।
चलेहुँ प्रसंग दुराएहु तबहूँ॥

१२७ संभु दीन्ह उपदेस हित नहिं नारदहि सोहान।
भरद्वाज कौतुक सुनहु हरि इच्छा बलवान॥

१ राम कीन्ह चाहहिं सोइ होई।
करै अन्यथा अस नहिं कोई॥
संभु बचन मुनि मन नहिं भाए।
तब बिरंचि के लोक सिधाए॥

Narad felt no anger at all 1
and spoke soothing words to Kama.
Bowing to Narad and taking his leave
the enchanter departed with his entourage.
The sage's goodness and his own guile— 2
all of it Kama reported in Indra's court.
Everyone who heard was astonished.
They praised the sage and bowed to Hari.
Then Narad went to see Shiva, 3
feeling conceit at his triumph over lust.[24]
He recounted Kama's doings to Shankar
and the great god affectionately advised him,
"Sage, I earnestly entreat you 4
that this incident you have narrated to me
you must never on any account tell to Hari!
Even should the topic arise, evade it."[25]

But the advice Shambhu gave for his benefit 127
was not pleasing to Narad.
Listen now, Bharadvaj, to how Hari's
all-powerful will played itself out.

Whatever Ram wishes to do comes to pass, 1
and no one can effect otherwise.
The sage did not like Shambhu's advice
and departed for Brahma's realm.

२ एक बार करतल बर बीना।
गावत हरि गुन गान प्रबीना॥
छीरसिंधु गवने मुनिनाथा।
जहँ बस श्रीनिवास श्रुतिमाथा॥
३ हरषि मिले उठि रमानिकेता।
बैठे आसन रिषिहि समेता॥
बोले बिहसि चराचर राया।
बहुते दिनन कीन्हि मुनि दाया॥
४ काम चरित नारद सब भाषे।
जद्यपि प्रथम बरजि सिवँ राखे॥
अति प्रचंड रघुपति कै माया।
जेहि न मोह अस को जग जाया॥

१२८ रूख बदन करि बचन मृदु बोले श्रीभगवान।
तुम्हरे सुमिरन तें मिटहिं मोह मार मद मान॥

१ सुनु मुनि मोह होइ मन ताकें।
ग्यान बिराग हृदय नहिं जाकें॥
ब्रह्मचरज ब्रत रत मतिधीरा।
तुम्हहि कि करइ मनोभव पीरा॥
२ नारद कहेउ सहित अभिमाना।
कृपा तुम्हारि सकल भगवाना॥
करुनानिधि मन दीख बिचारी।
उर अंकुरेउ गरब तरु भारी॥

One day, with his lute and finger-cymbals, 2
artfully singing Hari's praises,
the great seer went to the milky ocean
where Vishnu, Shri's husband, crown of the Veda, lived.
Lakshmi's lord rose joyfully to meet him 3
and seated the sage right at his side.
Smiling, the sovereign of all beings said,
"After many days you grace us, sage."
Narad told all the exploits of Kama, 4
though Shiva had warned him not to.
Lord Raghu's illusory power is almighty—
who, born in creation, is not deluded by it?

His face impassive, the blessed Lord 128
spoke honeyed words—
"Just calling you to mind, delusion, lust,
and arrogance are removed.

Sage, error only enters the mind of one 1
whose heart lacks wisdom and detachment.
Firm as you are in your vow of celibacy,
how can the mind-born god afflict you?"
Narad replied, though with conceit, 2
"It is all your grace, Lord."
But the compassionate one discerned
pride's mighty tree sprouting in his heart:

३ बेगि सो मैं डारिहउँ उखारी।
पन हमार सेवक हितकारी॥
मुनि कर हित मम कौतुक होई।
अवसि उपाय करबि मैं सोई॥
४ तब नारद हरि पद सिर नाई।
चले हृदयँ अहमिति अधिकाई॥
श्रीपति निज माया तब प्रेरी।
सुनहु कठिन करनी तेहि केरी॥

१२९ बिरचेउ मग महुँ नगर तेहिं सत जोजन बिस्तार।
श्रीनिवासपुर तें अधिक रचना बिबिध प्रकार॥

१ बसहिं नगर सुंदर नर नारी।
जनु बहु मनसिज रति तनुधारी॥
तेहिं पुर बसइ सीलनिधि राजा।
अगनित हय गय सेन समाजा॥
२ सत सुरेस सम बिभव बिलासा।
रूप तेज बल नीति निवासा॥
बिस्वमोहनी तासु कुमारी।
श्री बिमोह जिसु रूपु निहारी॥
३ सोइ हरिमाया सब गुन खानी।
सोभा तासु कि जाइ बखानी॥
करइ स्वयंबर सो नृपबाला।
आए तहँ अगनित महिपाला॥

"I will quickly uproot and dispose of it, 3
for I am sworn to help my servants.
For the sage's sake and my own sport
I will definitely devise a stratagem."
Then Narad bowed at Hari's feet 4
and departed, vast conceit in his heart.
Shri's lord activated his illusory power—
hear the mighty work it performed:

on the sage's route, it fabricated a metropolis 129
of a hundred leagues' extent,
marvelously crafted and more splendid
than Vishnu's own heavenly realm.

The handsomest men and women resided there, 1
like many incarnations of the love god and his mate.
Over that city reigned King Shilanidhi,*
with countless horses, elephants, armies,
and the glory and luxury of a hundred Indras— 2
epitome of beauty, splendor, strength, and statecraft.
His daughter was Vishvamohini,[26]
the sight of whose form would stun even Shri.
For the girl was Hari's maya, mine of all attributes, 3
and how can such beauty be described?
That princess was to choose a husband,[27]
and countless kings had come there.

* "Treasury of virtue."

४ मुनि कौतुकी नगर तेहिं गयऊ।
पुरबासिन्ह सब पूछत भयऊ॥
सुनि सब चरित भूपगृहँ आए।
करि पूजा नृप मुनि बैठाए॥

१३० आनि देखाई नारदहि भूपति राजकुमारि।
कहहु नाथ गुन दोष सब एहि के हृदयँ बिचारि॥

१ देखि रूप मुनि बिरति बिसारी।
बड़ी बार लगि रहे निहारी॥
लच्छन तासु बिलोकि भुलाने।
हृदयँ हरष नहिं प्रगट बखाने॥
२ जो एहि बरइ अमर सोइ होई।
समरभूमि तेहि जीत न कोई॥
सेवहिं सकल चराचर ताही।
बरइ सीलनिधि कन्या जाही॥
३ लच्छन सब बिचारि उर राखे।
कछुक बनाइ भूप सन भाषे॥
सुता सुलच्छन कहि नृप पाहीं।
नारद चले सोच मन माहीं॥
४ करौं जाइ सोइ जतन बिचारी।
जेहि प्रकार मोहि बरै कुमारी॥
जप तप कछु न होइ तेहि काला।
हे बिधि मिलइ कवन बिधि बाला॥

The itinerant sage entered that city 4
and made inquiry of the inhabitants.
Hearing what was afoot, he went to the palace,
where the king paid him homage and seated him.

The lord of earth summoned the princess 130
and showed her to Narad, saying—
"Master, by your discernment,
tell us of her virtues and flaws."

Seeing her, the sage forgot detachment 1
and went on staring for a long time.
Lost in gazing at her perfection,
he rejoiced at heart, silently musing,
"Whoever weds her will be immortal, 2
unconquerable on the field of war.
All beings will serve that lucky one
whom Shilanidhi's daughter chooses!"
But he kept all this to himself 3
and made up something to tell the king.
After reporting on her good qualities,
Narad left, his mind perturbed.
"I must go and devise some means 4
to make the princess favor me.
Meditation and asceticism will be useless.
Oh God, how can I get that girl?

१३१ एहि अवसर चाहिअ परम सोभा रूप बिसाल।
जो बिलोकि रीझै कुअँरि तब मेलै जयमाल॥

१ हरि सन मागौं सुंदरताई।
होइहि जात गहरु अति भाई॥
मोरें हित हरि सम नहिं कोऊ।
एहि अवसर सहाय सोइ होऊ॥
२ बहुबिधि बिनय कीन्हि तेहि काला।
प्रगटेउ प्रभु कौतुकी कृपाला॥
प्रभु बिलोकि मुनि नयन जुड़ाने।
होइहि काजु हिएँ हरषाने॥
३ अति आरति कहि कथा सुनाई।
करहु कृपा करि होहु सहाई॥
आपन रूप देहु प्रभु मोही।
आन भाँति नहिं पावौं ओही॥
४ जेहि बिधि नाथ होइ हित मोरा।
करहु सो बेगि दास मैं तोरा॥
निज माया बल देखि बिसाला।
हियँ हँसि बोले दीनदयाला॥

१३२ जेहि बिधि होइहि परम हित नारद सुनहु तुम्हार।
सोइ हम करब न आन कछु बचन न मृषा हमार॥

What I need right now are supreme good looks 131
and a most handsome form,
at sight of which the maid will be pleased
and bestow the victory garland on me.

I might beg the Lord for beauty, 1
but, dear me, approaching him will take time.
Still, no one cares for me like Hari,
and at this point, he alone can help."
Then he made many supplications, 2
and the playful, merciful Lord appeared.
At the sight of him, the sage was relieved[28]
and happily thought, "Now it's as good as done!"
Anguished, he told his tale, saying, 3
"Be gracious and come to my aid.
Lord, lend me your own beauty!
For there is no other way I can win her.
Whatever will benefit me, Master, 4
do at once, for I am your servant."
Seeing the power of his own illusion,
the merciful one smiled to himself and said,

"Listen to me, Narad. Whatever will effect 132
your ultimate good,
I will do, and nothing else.
My word is never in vain.

१ कुपथ माग रुज ब्याकुल रोगी।
बैद न देइ सुनहु मुनि जोगी॥
एहि बिधि हित तुम्हार मैं ठयऊ।
कहि अस अंतरहित प्रभु भयऊ॥

२ माया बिबस भए मुनि मूढ़ा।
समुझी नहिं हरि गिरा निगूढ़ा॥
गवने तुरत तहाँ रिषिराई।
जहाँ स्वयंबर भूमि बनाई॥

३ निज निज आसन बैठे राजा।
बहु बनाव करि सहित समाजा॥
मुनि मन हरष रूप अति मोरें।
मोहि तजि आनहि बरिहि न भोरें॥

४ मुनि हित कारन कृपानिधाना।
दीन्ह कुरूप न जाइ बखाना॥
सो चरित्र लखि काहुँ न पावा।
नारद जानि सबहिं सिर नावा॥

१३३ रहे तहाँ दुइ रुद्र गन ते जानहिं सब भेउ।
बिप्रबेष देखत फिरहिं परम कौतुकी तेउ॥

१ जेहिं समाज बैठे मुनि जाई।
हृदयँ रूप अहमिति अधिकाई॥
तहँ बैठे महेस गन दोऊ।
बिप्रबेष गति लखइ न कोऊ॥

When a suffering patient craves unwholesome food, 1
the doctor withholds it, wise adept.
Just so, I have determined what is best for you."
With this, the Lord vanished.
But the sage, stupefied by maya, 2
did not grasp Hari's clear message.
That king of sages immediately went
to the arena made for the bridegroom choice.
Kings were seated in their respective places, 3
richly adorned, with full entourage.
The sage thought gleefully, "I am so handsome,
she will not dream of choosing another!"
But, for the sage's good, the abode of mercy 4
had given him an indescribably ugly form,
though most could not discern it.
They just saw Narad and bowed respectfully.

Two of Rudra's servants were there, however, 133
and they divined the whole secret—
great pranksters who had taken Brahman guise
to roam about observing.

In the crowd where the sage was seated, 1
his heart swelling with pride over his looks,
the great god's two minions sat down,
unrecognizable in their Brahman getup,

२ करहिं कूटि नारदहि सुनाई।
नीकि दीन्हि हरि सुंदरताई॥
रीझिहि राजकुअँरि छबि देखी।
इन्हहि बरिहि हरि जानि बिसेषी॥
३ मुनिहि मोह मन हाथ पराएँ।
हँसहिं संभु गन अति सचु पाएँ॥
जदपि सुनहिं मुनि अटपटि बानी।
समुझि न परइ बुद्धि भ्रम सानी॥
४ काहुँ न लखा सो चरित बिसेषा।
सो सरूप नृपकन्याँ देखा॥
मर्कट बदन भयंकर देही।
देखत हृदयँ क्रोध भा तेही॥

१३४ सखीं संग लै कुअँरि तब चलि जनु राजमराल।
देखत फिरइ महीप सब कर सरोज जयमाल॥

१ जेहि दिसि बैठे नारद फूली।
सो दिसि तेहिं न बिलोकी भूली॥
पुनि पुनि मुनि उकसहिं अकुलाहीं।
देखि दसा हर गन मुसुकाहीं॥
२ धरि नृपतनु तहँ गयउ कृपाला।
कुअँरि हरषि मेलेउ जयमाला॥
दुलहिनि लै गे लच्छिनिवासा।
नृपसमाज सब भयउ निरासा॥

and spoke teasing riddles in Narad's earshot. 2
"Hari has truly made him . . . handsome!
The princess will be thrilled by his looks
and will choose him, for he's a real 'Hari'!"[29]
The deluded seer had lost his wits 3
and Shambhu's servants had a good laugh.
Though the sage heard their tricky speech,
his erring mind could not grasp it.
This farce went undetected by others, 4
but the princess herself saw his form,
with monkey face and warped physique,
and was instantly repulsed.

With her young companions, the maiden 134
glided away like a regal *haṃsa* goose,
surveying all the kings, the garland of victory
in her lotus-like hands.[30]

Toward where Narad sat preening himself, 1
she did not even deign to glance again.
The sage kept struggling to stand out,
and seeing his plight, Shiva's servants laughed.
The merciful Lord had gone there in kingly form 2
and on him the maid gladly placed the garland.
Lakshmi's lord then left with the bride
to the despair of the assembled kings.

३ मुनि अति बिकल मोहँ मति नाठी।
मनि गिरि गई छूटि जनु गाँठी॥
तब हर गन बोले मुसुकाई।
निज मुख मुकुर बिलोकहु जाई॥
४ अस कहि दोउ भागे भयँ भारी।
बदन दीख मुनि बारि निहारी॥
बेषु बिलोकि क्रोध अति बाढ़ा।
तिन्हहि सराप दीन्ह अति गाढ़ा॥

१३५ होहु निसाचर जाइ तुम्ह कपटी पापी दोउ।
हँसेहु हमहि सो लेहु फल बहुरि हँसेहु मुनि कोउ॥

१ पुनि जल दीख रूप निज पावा।
तदपि हृदयँ संतोष न आवा॥
फरकत अधर कोप मन माहीं।
सपदि चले कमलापति पाहीं॥
२ देहउँ श्राप कि मरिहउँ जाई।
जगत मोरि उपहास कराई॥
बीचहिं पंथ मिले दनुजारी।
संग रमा सोइ राजकुमारी॥
३ बोले मधुर बचन सुरसाईं।
मुनि कहँ चले बिकल की नाईं॥
सुनत बचन उपजा अति क्रोधा।
माया बस न रहा मन बोधा॥

The sage, undone by delusion, was beside himself, 3
like one who has lost a jewel from his waistband.[31]
Then Shiva's minions grinned and said,
"Go look at your face in a mirror!"
With this, they raced off in fear, 4
while the sage beheld himself in a water basin.
Seeing his shape, he was enraged,
and pronounced an awful curse upon the pair:

"Both of you evil deceivers— 135
become night-roaming demons,
and reap the fruit of your fun at my expense.
Try laughing at a sage again!"

Looking back in the water, he had regained his form 1
yet his heart was still not calmed.
With trembling lips and angry mind
he went after Lakshmi's lord.
"I will either curse him or die, 2
for making me a laughing stock of the world."
On the way, he met that foe of demons
accompanied by Lakshmi and the princess.
The Lord of gods gently asked, 3
"Where are you going, sage, like one in distress?"
When Narad heard this, his rage flared up,
for illusion's spell had erased his wisdom.

४ पर संपदा सकहु नहिं देखी।
तुम्हरें इरिषा कपट बिसेषी॥
मथत सिंधु रुद्रहि बौरायहु।
सुरन्ह प्रेरि बिष पान करायहु॥

१३६ असुर सुरा बिष संकरहि आपु रमा मनि चारु।
स्वारथ साधक कुटिल तुम्ह सदा कपट ब्यवहारु॥

१ परम स्वतंत्र न सिर पर कोई।
भावइ मनहि करहु तुम्ह सोई॥
भलेहि मंद मंदेहि भल करहू।
बिसमय हरष न हियँ कछु धरहू॥
२ डहकि डहकि परिचेहु सब काहू।
अति असंक मन सदा उछाहू॥
करम सुभासुभ तुम्हहि न बाधा।
अब लगि तुम्हहि न काहूँ साधा॥
३ भले भवन अब बायन दीन्हा।
पावहुगे फल आपन कीन्हा॥
बंचेहु मोहि जवनि धरि देहा।
सोइ तनु धरहु श्राप मम एहा॥
४ कपि आकृति तुम्ह कीन्हि हमारी।
करिहहिं कीस सहाय तुम्हारी॥
मम अपकार कीन्ह तुम्ह भारी।
नारि बिरहँ तुम्ह होब दुखारी॥

"You cannot bear to see others prosper," 4
he cried, "so great is your jealousy and guile!
At the ocean's churning, you deluded Rudra,
and incited the gods to make him drink poison.

The demons got liquor, Shankar, venom, 136
while you made off with Shri and the gem![32]
You are devious and bent on self-interest
and your ways are eternally wily.

Supremely independent, with none above you, 1
you do whatever suits your fancy,
dealing bad for good and good for bad,
and no dismay or joy burdens your heart.
Constantly cheating everyone, 2
you are utterly fearless and ever zealous,
for good and bad karma never impede you
and till now, no one has set you straight.
But now you've knocked on the wrong door[33] 3
and you will reap the fruit of your deeds!
The very body you took on to trick me—
go assume that form![34] This is my curse.
You gave me a monkey's shape, 4
so monkeys will be your helpers,
and for the awful injury you did me,
you will suffer separation from a woman."

१३७ श्राप सीस धरि हरषि हियँ प्रभु बहु बिनती कीन्हि ।
निज माया कै प्रबलता करषि कृपानिधि लीन्हि ॥

१ जब हरि माया दूरि निवारी ।
नहिं तहँ रमा न राजकुमारी ॥
तब मुनि अति सभीत हरि चरना ।
गहे पाहि प्रनतारति हरना ॥
२ मृषा होउ मम श्राप कृपाला ।
मम इच्छा कह दीनदयाला ॥
मैं दुर्बचन कहे बहुतेरे ।
कह मुनि पाप मिटिहिं किमि मेरे ॥
३ जपहु जाइ संकर सत नामा ।
होइहि हृदयँ तुरत बिश्रामा ॥
कोउ नहिं सिव समान प्रिय मोरें ।
असि परतीति तजहु जनि भोरें ॥
४ जेहि पर कृपा न करहिं पुरारी ।
सो न पाव मुनि भगति हमारी ॥
अस उर धरि महि बिचरहु जाई ।
अब न तुम्हहि माया निअराई ॥

१३८ बहुबिधि मुनिहि प्रबोधि प्रभु तब भए अंतरधान ।
सत्यलोक नारद चले करत राम गुन गान ॥

Inwardly rejoicing, the Lord accepted 137
the curse with great humility,
and then the compassionate one
drew back the power of his maya.

When Hari withdrew his illusion, 1
neither Lakshmi nor the princess remained.
The sage fell at his feet in terror, crying
"Save me, rescuer of the afflicted!
Let my curse be void, merciful one!" 2
But the gracious one said, "It is my will."
"And for the many spiteful things I said,"
added the sage, "how can my sin be erased?"
The Lord said, "Repeat Shankar's hundred names 3
and your heart will at once find peace.
For none is as dear to me as Shiva—
never, ever abandon this conviction.
Without the grace of the triple cities' foe, 4
no one finds loving faith in me, sage.
Bearing this in mind, go wander the earth,
for now illusion will never assail you."

After thus enlightening the sage in diverse ways, 138
the Lord disappeared,
and Narad departed for Brahma's realm,
singing Ram's praises.

१ हर गन मुनिहि जात पथ देखी।
बिगत मोह मन हरष बिसेषी॥
अति सभीत नारद पहिं आए।
गहि पद आरत बचन सुनाए॥
२ हर गन हम न बिप्र मुनिराया।
बड़ अपराध कीन्ह फल पाया॥
श्राप अनुग्रह करहु कृपाला।
बोले नारद दीनदयाला॥
३ निसिचर जाइ होहु तुम्ह दोऊ।
बैभव बिपुल तेज बल होऊ॥
भुज बल बिस्व जितब तुम्ह जहिआ।
धरिहहिं बिष्नु मनुज तनु तहिआ॥
४ समर मरन हरि हाथ तुम्हारा।
होइहहु मुकुत न पुनि संसारा॥
चले जुगल मुनि पद सिर नाई।
भए निसाचर कालहि पाई॥

१३९ एक कलप एहि हेतु प्रभु लीन्ह मनुज अवतार।
सुर रंजन सज्जन सुखद हरि भंजन भुबि भार॥

१ एहि बिधि जनम करम हरि केरे।
सुंदर सुखद बिचित्र घनेरे॥
कलप कलप प्रति प्रभु अवतरहीं।
चारु चरित नानाबिधि करहीं॥

Shiva's two servants saw the sage leaving, 1
now free of delusion and happy at heart.
In great dread, they came before Narad
and clasped his feet, crying out in despair.
"We are Hara's helpers, not Brahmans, sage! 2
For our awful offense, we earned the rightful fruit.
But now, kindly one, relieve us of the curse."
With pity for the afflicted, Narad spoke,
"Go, you two, and become night-stalkers, 3
but of vast strength and majesty.
With mighty arms, you will subdue the world
and then Vishnu will take on a human body.
Slain in battle by Hari's hand 4
you will be freed from further rebirth."
The two bowed before the sage and left
and in due course were born as demons.

This was the cause, in one cosmic cycle, 139
of the Lord taking human form,
to please the gods and gladden the good
and relieve the earth's burden.

Just so, Lord Hari's births and acts 1
are many and marvelous, lovely and pleasing.
In repeated cosmic cycles, the Lord incarnates
and does all manner of beautiful deeds.

२ तब तब कथा मुनीसन्ह गाई।
परम पुनीत प्रबंध बनाई॥
बिबिध प्रसंग अनूप बखाने।
करहिं न सुनि आचरजु सयाने॥
३ हरि अनंत हरि कथा अनंता।
कहहिं सुनहिं बहुबिधि सब संता॥
रामचंद्र के चरित सुहाए।
कलप कोटि लगि जाहिं न गाए॥
४ यह प्रसंग मैं कहा भवानी।
हरिमायाँ मोहहिं मुनि ग्यानी॥
प्रभु कौतुकी प्रनत हितकारी।
सेवत सुलभ सकल दुखहारी॥

१४० सुर नर मुनि कोउ नाहिं जेहि न मोह माया प्रबल।
अस बिचारि मन माहिं भजिअ महामाया पतिहि॥

१ अपर हेतु सुनु सैलकुमारी।
कहउँ बिचित्र कथा बिस्तारी॥
जेहि कारन अज अगुन अरूपा।
ब्रह्म भयउ कोसलपुर भूपा॥
२ जो प्रभु बिपिन फिरत तुम्ह देखा।
बंधु समेत धरें मुनिबेषा॥
जासु चरित अवलोकि भवानी।
सती सरीर रहिहु बौरानी॥

Each time, great sages sing his story, 2
crafting supremely holy narratives
with diverse tales incomparably told,
yet they never surprise wise listeners.
For Hari is endless and so is his story, 3
told and heard in many ways by holy ones.
The beautiful acts of Ramchandra
cannot be sung even in a billion aeons.
I have related this episode, Bhavani, 4
in which Hari's maya deluded even a sage.
Playful but ever protective, the Lord
responds to simple worship, removing all sorrows.

There is no god, sage, or human 140
whom potent illusion cannot bewitch.
Reflect on this and sing the praise
of mighty maya's own master!

Listen, daughter of the mountain, to another cause 1
of his birth, a wondrous tale I will expound,
explaining why the unborn and formless
God became king of Kosala—
the lord you saw roaming the forest 2
with his brother, in ascetic garb,
and whose behavior so bewildered you,
Bhavani, when in Sati's body,

३ अजहुँ न छाया मिटति तुम्हारी।
तासु चरित सुनु भ्रम रुज हारी॥
लीला कीन्हि जो तेहिं अवतारा।
सो सब कहिहउँ मति अनुसारा॥
४ भरद्वाज सुनि संकर बानी।
सकुचि सप्रेम उमा मुसुकानी॥
लगे बहुरि बरनै बृषकेतू।
सो अवतार भयउ जेहि हेतू॥

१४१ सो मैं तुम्ह सन कहउँ सबु सुनु मुनीस मन लाइ।
राम कथा कलि मल हरनि मंगल करनि सुहाइ॥

१ स्वायंभू मनु अरु सतरूपा।
जिन्ह तें भै नरसृष्टि अनूपा॥
दंपति धरम आचरन नीका।
अजहुँ गाव श्रुति जिन्ह कै लीका॥
२ नृप उत्तानपाद सुत तासू।
ध्रुव हरिभगत भयउ सुत जासू॥
लघु सुत नाम प्रियब्रत ताही।
बेद पुरान प्रसंसहिं जाही॥
३ देवहूति पुनि तासु कुमारी।
जो मुनि कर्दम कै प्रिय नारी॥
आदिदेव प्रभु दीनदयाला।
जठर धरेउ जेहिं कपिल कृपाला॥

that its shadow still hangs over you. 3
Hear of his acts, which cure the ill of error.
And the play he performed in that incarnation
I will relate according to my understanding."
Bharadvaj,[35] when she heard Shankar's words, 4
Uma gave a shy and loving smile.
Her bull-bannered lord then began to explain
the cause of that very birth.

All of that I will now tell you. 141
Listen attentively, foremost of sages,
for Ram's lovely tale removes the taint
of the Kali age and brings blessings.

Self-born Manu and his wife, Satarupa,[36] 1
through whom the human realm came to be,
were a couple pure in dharma and deportment,
whose fame, even now, is sung by the Veda.
King Uttanapad was their son, 2
and his son, Dhruv, became Hari's great devotee.
Their younger son was named Priyavrat,
who is praised in Veda and *purāṇa*.
Then they had a daughter, Devahuti, 3
who became sage Kardama's beloved wife.
The original God, gracious to the afflicted,
she bore in her womb as merciful Kapil,

४ सांख्य सास्त्र जिन्ह प्रगट बखाना।
तत्त्व बिचार निपुन भगवाना॥
तेहिं मनु राज कीन्ह बहु काला।
प्रभु आयसु सब बिधि प्रतिपाला॥

१४२ होइ न बिषय बिराग भवन बसत भा चौथपन।
हृदयँ बहुत दुख लाग जनम गयउ हरिभगति बिनु॥

१ बरबस राज सुतहि तब दीन्हा।
नारि समेत गवन बन कीन्हा॥
तीरथ बर नैमिष बिख्याता।
अति पुनीत साधक सिधि दाता॥
२ बसहिं तहाँ मुनि सिद्ध समाजा।
तहँ हियँ हरषि चलेउ मनु राजा॥
पंथ जात सोहहिं मतिधीरा।
ग्यान भगति जनु धरें सरीरा॥
३ पहुँचे जाइ धेनुमति तीरा।
हरषि नहाने निरमल नीरा॥
आए मिलन सिद्ध मुनि ग्यानी।
धरम धुरंधर नृपरिषि जानी॥
४ जहँ जहँ तीरथ रहे सुहाए।
मुनिन्ह सकल सादर करवाए॥
कृस सरीर मुनिपट परिधाना।
सत समाज नित सुनहिं पुराना॥

who expounded the treatise on metaphysics,[37] 4
for the Lord is adept at discerning essence.
King Manu reigned for a long time
upholding all the Lord's commands.

Engrossed in mundane affairs, he reached old age 142
still ruling in the palace,
and his heart was much pained: "My birth has passed
without real love for Hari."

So he handed over the kingdom to his son 1
and set off with his wife to the forest
of Naimisha, famous among holy places.
Sacred for granting success to seekers,
it was inhabited by sages and adepts. 2
There King Manu went with a glad heart.
Staunch in their aim, the royal wayfarers
looked like wisdom and devotion incarnate.
They arrived at the bank of the Gomati 3
and joyfully bathed in its clear water.
Sages and adepts came to meet Manu,
knowing him as a seer-king who upheld dharma.
To all the lovely pilgrimage places 4
the sages reverently brought the pair.
Their lean bodies clad in bark cloth,
they listened to sacred lore in holy assemblies.

१४३ द्वादस अच्छर मंत्र पुनि जपहिं सहित अनुराग।
बासुदेव पद पंकरुह दंपति मन अति लाग॥

१ करहिं अहार साक फल कंदा।
सुमिरहिं ब्रह्म सच्चिदानंदा॥
पुनि हरि हेतु करन तप लागे।
बारि अधार मूल फल त्यागे॥
२ उर अभिलाष निरंतर होई।
देखिअ नयन परम प्रभु सोई॥
अगुन अखंड अनंत अनादी।
जेहि चिंतहिं परमारथबादी॥
३ नेति नेति जेहि बेद निरूपा।
निजानंद निरुपाधि अनूपा॥
संभु बिरंचि बिष्नु भगवाना।
उपजहिं जासु अंस तें नाना॥
४ ऐसेउ प्रभु सेवक बस अहई।
भगत हेतु लीलातनु गहई॥
जौं यह बचन सत्य श्रुति भाषा।
तौ हमार पूजिहि अभिलाषा॥

१४४ एहि बिधि बीते बरष षट सहस बारि आहार।
संबत सप्त सहस्र पुनि रहे समीर अधार॥

Then, repeating with intense love 143
the twelve-syllable mantra,[38]
the couple's hearts grew firmly attached
to Vasudev's lotus feet.

They subsisted on greens, fruits, and roots, 1
meditating on the one who is being, consciousness, bliss.
Then for Hari's sake they undertook asceticism,
abandoning fruits and roots to live on water,
while in their hearts was the constant yearning, 2
"May we see with our own eyes the supreme Lord,
without attributes, indivisible, endless and primordial,
whom seekers of the ultimate contemplate,
and the Veda identifies as 'Not this, not that,' 3
self-contained bliss, nameless, incomparable,
from a fraction of whose being Shivas, Brahmas,
and Vishnus spring forth in multitudes.
Yet, such a Lord is subject to his servants 4
and for their sake takes form in his play.
So Veda declares, and if this is true,
then our wish will surely be fulfilled."

In this way, six thousand years passed 144
while they consumed only water,
and for seven thousand more
they lived on wind alone.

१ बरष सहस दस त्यागेउ सोऊ।
ठाढ़े रहे एक पद दोऊ॥
बिधि हरि हर तप देखि अपारा।
मनु समीप आए बहु बारा॥
२ मागहु बर बहु भाँति लोभाए।
परम धीर नहिं चलहिं चलाए॥
अस्थिमात्र होइ रहे सरीरा।
तदपि मनाग मनहिं नहिं पीरा॥
३ प्रभु सर्बग्य दास निज जानी।
गति अनन्य तापस नृप रानी॥
मागु मागु बरु भै नभ बानी।
परम गभीर कृपामृत सानी॥
४ मृतक जिआवनि गिरा सुहाई।
श्रवन रंध्र होइ उर जब आई॥
हृष्ट पुष्ट तन भए सुहाए।
मानहुँ अबहिं भवन ते आए॥

१४५ श्रवन सुधा सम बचन सुनि पुलक प्रफुल्लित गात।
बोले मनु करि दंडवत प्रेम न हृदयँ समात॥

१ सुनु सेवक सुरतरु सुरधेनू।
बिधि हरि हर बंदित पद रेनू॥
सेवत सुलभ सकल सुखदायक।
प्रनतपाल सचराचर नायक॥

For ten thousand years, they gave up even that 1
and stood immobile, each of them, on one leg.
Seeing their endless austerity, Brahma, Hari, and Shiva
came before Manu many times, saying,
"Ask a boon," tempting him greatly, 2
but they were unmoved in their supreme resolve.
Though reduced to skeletons in body
their hearts did not feel the least pain.
Omniscient God recognized his servants, 3
set on him alone, in the ascetic king and queen.
Then, "Ask a boon!" was heard repeatedly from the sky
in a profound voice imbued with mercy's nectar,
so comforting as to revive a corpse. 4
When it flowed through their ears to their hearts,
their bodies grew as whole and handsome
as when they had first gone forth from home.

When they heard these ambrosial words, 145
their bodies shivered with thrills of joy.
Prostrating himself fully, Manu spoke,
his heart unable to contain his love.

"Tree of wishes, cow of plenty to your servants, 1
the dust of your feet is adored by the three great gods.
Easily attained by worship, you grant all delights
and protect your devotees, Lord of beings!

२ जौं अनाथ हित हम पर नेहू।
तौ प्रसन्न होइ यह बर देहू॥
जो सरूप बस सिव मन माहीं।
जेहिं कारन मुनि जतन कराहीं॥
३ जो भुसुंडि मन मानस हंसा।
सगुन अगुन जेहि निगम प्रसंसा॥
देखहिं हम सो रूप भरि लोचन।
कृपा करहु प्रनतारति मोचन॥
४ दंपति बचन परम प्रिय लागे।
मृदुल बिनीत प्रेम रस पागे॥
भगत बछल प्रभु कृपानिधाना।
बिस्वबास प्रगटे भगवाना॥

१४६ नील सरोरुह नील मनि नील नीरधर स्याम।
लाजहिं तन सोभा निरखि कोटि कोटि सत काम॥

१ सरद मयंक बदन छबि सींवा।
चारु कपोल चिबुक दर ग्रीवा॥
अधर अरुन रद सुंदर नासा।
बिधु कर निकर बिनिंदक हासा॥
२ नव अंबुज अंबक छबि नीकी।
चितवनि ललित भावँती जी की॥
भृकुटि मनोज चाप छबि हारी।
तिलक ललाट पटल दुतिकारी॥

Help of the helpless, if you would favor us, 2
then be pleased to grant this boon:
the form that dwells in Shiva's heart,
which sages exert themselves to find,
haṃsa bird on the Manas lake of Bhushundi's mind, 3
which Veda praises as both form and formless—
may we gaze on that form with our own eyes,
Savior of the meek, by your grace!"
Well pleased by the couple's speech, 4
tender, humble, and soaked in love's nectar,
the all-merciful Lord, who loves his devotees,
the ground of being, God himself, appeared.

His body was dark as a blue lotus, a sapphire, 146
and a rain-bearing cloud,
and the sight of his beauty put billions
and billions of love gods to shame.

The autumn moon of his face surpassed all splendor, 1
with lovely cheeks and chin, conch-like neck,[39]
ruddy lips, charming teeth and nose,
and a smile that mocked the moonbeams.
His eyes eclipsed the beauty of new lotuses 2
and his sweet glance delighted the soul.
His brows stole the charm of the love god's bow
and his forehead mark shimmered like lightning.

३ कुंडल मकर मुकुट सिर भ्राजा।
कुटिल केस जनु मधुप समाजा॥
उर श्रीबत्स रुचिर बनमाला।
पदिक हार भूषन मनि जाला॥
४ केहरि कंधर चारु जनेऊ।
बाहु बिभूषन सुंदर तेऊ॥
करि कर सरिस सुभग भुजदंडा।
कटि निषंग कर सर कोदंडा॥

१४७ तड़ित बिनिंदक पीत पट उदर रेख बर तीनि।
नाभि मनोहर लेति जनु जमुन भवँर छबि छीनि॥

१ पद राजीव बरनि नहिं जाहीं।
मुनि मन मधुप बसहिं जेन्ह माहीं॥
बाम भाग सोभति अनुकूला।
आदिसक्ति छबिनिधि जगमूला॥
२ जासु अंस उपजहिं गुनखानी।
अगनित लच्छि उमा ब्रह्मानी॥
भृकुटि बिलास जासु जग होई।
राम बाम दिसि सीता सोई॥
३ छबिसमुद्र हरि रूप बिलोकी।
एकटक रहे नयन पट रोकी॥
चितवहिं सादर रूप अनूपा।
तृप्ति न मानहिं मनु सतरूपा॥

Makara earrings hung below his radiant crown 3
and his curly locks were like a swarm of black bees.
On his breast was Shri's emblem, a wildflower garland,
and a nine-gem necklace set with diamonds.
On his lion-like shoulders shone a sacred thread, 4
and his armbands were beautiful too,
on lovely arms, stout as elephants' trunks,
and he had a quiver at his waist and arrows and bow in
hand.

His yellow garment put lightning to shame, 147
his belly bore three fair folds,
and his deep navel seemed to steal the charm
of blue Yamuna's eddies.

There is no describing the lotuses of his feet, 1
where sages' hearts hover like bees.
And matching his splendor, at his left side
was the glorious primal energy of creation,
the treasury of traits, from a fraction of whom 2
spring countless Lakshmis, Umas, and Brahmanis,*
and from the play of whose brows the world arises—
there, at Ram's left—Sita herself.[40]
Seeing the Lord's embodiment, ocean of beauty, 3
they stood awestruck and unblinking.
Manu and Satarupa could not get enough
of gazing reverently at his matchless form.

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* Brahmani: Brahma's wife, Sarasvati.

४ हरष बिबस तन दसा भुलानी।
परे दंड इव गहि पद पानी॥
सिर परसे प्रभु निज कर कंजा।
तुरत उठाए करुनापुंजा॥

१४८ बोले कृपानिधान पुनि अति प्रसन्न मोहि जानि।
मागहु बर जोइ भाव मन महादानि अनुमानि॥

१ सुनि प्रभु बचन जोरि जुग पानी।
धरि धीरजु बोली मृदु बानी॥
नाथ देखि पद कमल तुम्हारे।
अब पूरे सब काम हमारे॥
२ एक लालसा बड़ि उर माहीं।
सुगम अगम कहि जाति सो नाहीं॥
तुम्हहि देत अति सुगम गोसाईं।
अगम लाग मोहि निज कृपनाईं॥
३ जथा दरिद्र बिबुधतरु पाई।
बहु संपति मागत सकुचाई॥
तासु प्रभाउ जान नहिं सोई।
तथा हृदयँ मम संसय होई॥
४ सो तुम्ह जानहु अंतरजामी।
पुरवहु मोर मनोरथ स्वामी॥
सकुच बिहाइ मागु नृप मोही।
मोरें नहिं अदेय कछु तोही॥

Overcome by joy, heedless of their bodies, 4
they fell like sticks and clutched his feet.
Touching their heads with his lovely hands
the merciful Lord quickly lifted them up.

Then the abode of compassion spoke— 148
"Know that I am most pleased
and ready to give generously. Ask whatever wish
will content your hearts."

At his words, the king, with palms joined 1
composed himself to utter a sweet speech.
"Lord, at the sight of your lotus feet
all our longings are now fulfilled.
Yet one great wish remains in our hearts— 2
inexpressible, as it is both easy and impossible.
It is so simple for you to give, Master,
yet seems unattainable to me, in my limitation,
as if a pauper, gaining the gods' treasure-tree, 3
shrank from asking for abundant wealth
because he did not know its power—
such is the hesitation in my heart.
Yet you know it all, omniscient one. 4
Fulfill our yearning, Lord!"
God said, "King, stop hesitating and ask of me,
for there is nothing I would not give you."

१४९ दानि सिरोमनि कृपानिधि नाथ कहउँ सतिभाउ।
चाहउँ तुम्हहि समान सुत प्रभु सन कवन दुराउ॥

१ देखि प्रीति सुनि बचन अमोले।
एवमस्तु करुनानिधि बोले॥
आपु सरिस खोजौं कहँ जाई।
नृप तव तनय होब मैं आई॥
२ सतरूपहि बिलोकि कर जोरें।
देबि मागु बरु जो रुचि तोरें॥
जो बरु नाथ चतुर नृप मागा।
सोइ कृपाल मोहि अति प्रिय लागा॥
३ प्रभु परंतु सुठि होति ढिठाई।
जदपि भगत हित तुम्हहि सोहाई॥
तुम्ह ब्रह्मादि जनक जग स्वामी।
ब्रह्म सकल उर अंतरजामी॥
४ अस समुझत मन संसय होई।
कहा जो प्रभु प्रवान पुनि सोई॥
जे निज भगत नाथ तव अहहीं।
जो सुख पावहिं जो गति लहहीं॥

१५० सोइ सुख सोइ गति सोइ भगति सोइ निज चरन सनेहु।
सोइ बिबेक सोइ रहनि प्रभु हमहि कृपा करि देहु॥

Then Manu said, "Crown jewel of givers, 149
treasury of mercy, I declare in truth—
for what is hidden from you, Lord?—
that I long to have a son like you!"

Seeing his love, hearing his matchless speech, 1
the font of mercy spoke—"So it shall be.
Yet where would I find another like me?
I myself, king, will come and be your son."
Then, seeing Satarupa's prayerful stance 2
he said, "Divine lady, ask the boon you fancy."
"Master," she said, "what the clever king requested
is also dearest to me, merciful one.
Still, I am most impertinent, Lord— 3
though this pleases you, for you love your devotees.
You father the gods and rule the universe
as creator and inner knower of all hearts.
Realizing this, I feel hesitation, 4
but your word, Lord, must be fulfilled.
Those who are your devoted ones—
the bliss they gain and the end they attain,

that very bliss, that supreme state, 150
that same devotion and love for your feet,
that discrimination, and that virtuous life,
my Lord, graciously give to me."

१ सुनि मृदु गूढ़ रुचिर बर रचना।
कृपासिंधु बोले मृदु बचना॥
जो कछु रुचि तुम्हरे मन माहीं।
मैं सो दीन्ह सब संसय नाहीं॥
२ मातु बिबेक अलौकिक तोरें।
कबहुँ न मिटिहि अनुग्रह मोरें॥
बंदि चरन मनु कहेउ बहोरी।
अवर एक बिनती प्रभु मोरी॥
३ सुत बिषइक तव पद रति होऊ।
मोही बड़ मूढ़ कहै किन कोऊ॥
मनि बिनु फनि जिमि जल बिनु मीना।
मम जीवन तिमि तुम्हहि अधीना॥
४ अस बरु मागि चरन गहि रहेऊ।
एवमस्तु करुनानिधि कहेऊ॥
अब तुम्ह मम अनुसासन मानी।
बसहु जाइ सुरपति रजधानी॥

१५१ तहँ करि भोग बिसाल तात गएँ कछु काल पुनि।
होइहहु अवध भुआल तब मैं होब तुम्हार सुत॥

१ इच्छामय नरबेष सँवारें।
होइहउँ प्रगट निकेत तुम्हारें॥
अंसन्ह सहित देह धरि ताता।
करिहउँ चरित भगत सुखदाता॥

Hearing her speech, sweet and profound, 1
the ocean of mercy tenderly replied,
"All the wishes of your heart
I have granted, no doubt of this.
Mother, your spiritual insight, 2
by my grace, will never be effaced."
Saluting his feet, Manu spoke again:
"Lord, I have one other request—
to adore your feet, as a father his son's, 3
even if I am called the greatest fool.
As a cobra and its gem, or a fish and water,
so may my lifespan depend on you."
Asking this boon, he held the Lord's feet 4
and the compassionate one said, "So be it!
And now, with my leave, go
and dwell in Indra's heavenly city.

Savor its immense delights, 151
and after some time has passed,
become the king of Avadh
and I will become your son.

Shaping a human guise by my wish 1
I will appear in your home.
Taking form with all my aspects, father,
I will perform deeds to gladden devotees,

२ जे सुनि सादर नर बड़भागी।
भव तरिहहिं ममता मद त्यागी ॥
आदिसक्ति जेहिं जग उपजाया।
सोउ अवतरिहि मोरि यह माया ॥
३ पुरउब मैं अभिलाष तुम्हारा।
सत्य सत्य पन सत्य हमारा ॥
पुनि पुनि अस कहि कृपानिधाना।
अंतरधान भए भगवाना ॥
४ दंपति उर धरि भगत कृपाला।
तेहिं आश्रम निवसे कछु काला ॥
समय पाइ तनु तजि अनयासा।
जाइ कीन्ह अमरावति बासा ॥

१५२ यह इतिहास पुनीत अति उमहि कही बृषकेतु।
भरद्वाज सुनु अपर पुनि राम जनम कर हेतु ॥

१ सुनु मुनि कथा पुनीत पुरानी।
जो गिरिजा प्रति संभु बखानी ॥
बिस्व बिदित एक कैकय देसू।
सत्यकेतु तहँ बसइ नरेसू ॥
२ धरम धुरंधर नीति निधाना।
तेज प्रताप सील बलवाना ॥
तेहि कें भए जुगल सुत बीरा।
सब गुन धाम महा रनधीरा ॥

and fortunate ones, reverently hearing of them, 2
will renounce pride and possessiveness, and cross the
world's sea.
The primal energy, mother of the world—
this maya of mine will descend with me.
Indeed, I shall fulfill your wish, 3
and my promise is true, true, true!"
Repeating this, that most merciful
and supreme God vanished from sight.
Keeping the gracious one in their hearts, 4
the couple lived on in that ashram.
In time, they effortlessly shed their bodies
and went to live in Amaravati.*

This holiest of histories was told to Uma 152
by her lord of the bull banner.
And now, Bharadvaj, hear yet another reason
for Ram's birth.

Listen, sage, to an ancient, sacred tale, 1
which Shambhu told the mountain's daughter.
There was a land called Kaikeya, greatly famed,
where Satyaketu resided as king.
Upholder of dharma, paragon of statecraft, 2
radiant, virtuous, immensely strong,
he sired two heroic sons,
great warriors who were full of virtue.

* Indra's heavenly city.

३ राज धनी जो जेठ सुत आही।
नाम प्रतापभानु अस ताही॥
अपर सुतहि अरिमर्दन नामा।
भुज बल अतुल अचल संग्रामा॥
४ भाइहि भाइहि परम समीती।
सकल दोष छल बरजित प्रीती॥
जेठे सुतहि राज नृप दीन्हा।
हरि हित आपु गवन बन कीन्हा॥

१५३ जब प्रतापरबि भयउ नृप फिरी दोहाई देस।
प्रजा पाल अति बेदबिधि कतहुँ नहीं अघ लेस॥

१ नृप हितकारक सचिव सयाना।
नाम धरमरुचि सुक्र समाना॥
सचिव सयान बंधु बलबीरा।
आपु प्रतापपुंज रनधीरा॥
२ सेन संग चतुरंग अपारा।
अमित सुभट सब समर जुझारा॥
सेन बिलोकि राउ हरषाना।
अरु बाजे गहगहे निसाना॥
३ बिजय हेतु कटकई बनाई।
सुदिन साधि नृप चलेउ बजाई॥
जहँ तहँ परीं अनेक लराईं।
जीते सकल भूप बरिआईं॥

His elder son and heir apparent 3
was named Pratapbhanu, "sun of glory,"
and the other, Arimardan, "slayer of foes,"
incomparably strong and steadfast in battle.
The brothers were dearest friends, 4
with faultless and sincere affection.
The king gave the elder the kingdom
and retired to the forest, seeking God.

When that sun of splendor became king, his glory 153
was proclaimed throughout the land.
He fostered his subjects by Vedic stricture
and nowhere was there a trace of sin.

The king was aided by a sagacious minister 1
named Dharmaruchi, who was like the gods' guru.[41]
Thus he had a wise counselor, a heroic brother,
and was himself a fiery and fearless warrior.
He possessed a vast army of four divisions,[42] 2
made up of countless diehard champions.
Surveying his army, the king rejoiced
as great war drums were sounded.
Readying his force for conquest, 3
the king chose a favorable day and marched forth.
Engaging in countless battles on every side
he triumphed, subduing all the earth's rulers.

४ सप्त दीप भुज बल बस कीन्हे ।
लै लै दंड छाड़ि नृप दीन्हे ॥
सकल अवनि मंडल तेहि काला ।
एक प्रतापभानु महिपाला ॥

१५४ स्वबस बिस्व करि बाहुबल निज पुर कीन्ह प्रबेसु ।
अरथ धरम कामादि सुख सेवइ समयँ नरेसु ॥

१ भूप प्रतापभानु बल पाई ।
कामधेनु भै भूमि सुहाई ॥
सब दुख बरजित प्रजा सुखारी ।
धरमसील सुंदर नर नारी ॥
२ सचिव धरमरुचि हरि पद प्रीती ।
नृप हित हेतु सिखव नित नीती ॥
गुर सुर संत पितर महिदेवा ।
करइ सदा नृप सब कै सेवा ॥
३ भूप धरम जे बेद बखाने ।
सकल करइ सादर सुख माने ॥
दिन प्रति देइ बिबिध बिधि दाना ।
सुनइ सास्त्र बर बेद पुराना ॥
४ नाना बापीं कूप तड़ागा ।
सुमन बाटिका सुंदर बागा ॥
बिप्रभवन सुरभवन सुहाए ।
सब तीरथन्ह बिचित्र बनाए ॥

He forcibly seized the seven continents, 4
took tribute, and gave the lands back to their lords.
And so, in those days, the whole world
acknowledged one overlord—Pratapbhanu.

Having subdued the earth by his arms' might, 154
the lord of men reentered his city
and engaged in the timely enjoyment
of dharma, profit, pleasure, and so on.

Under the sway of King Pratapbhanu 1
the earth became a lovely cow of plenty.
His subjects happy, freed of all sorrows,
were comely and virtuous men and women.
Minister Dharmaruchi was devoted to Hari's feet 2
and always guided the king in good policy.
To guru, gods, sages, elders, and Brahmans
the king rendered constant service.
The dharma for rulers prescribed in the Veda 3
he executed fully, with reverence and joy.
Each day he gave out abundant alms
and listened to sacred lore and wise treatises.
With countless wells and reservoirs, 4
flower gardens, lovely parks,
and fine houses for Brahmans and gods,
the king adorned all pilgrimage places.

१५५ जहँ लगि कहे पुरान श्रुति एक एक सब जाग।
बार सहस्र सहस्र नृप किए सहित अनुराग॥

१ हृदयँ न कछु फल अनुसंधाना।
भूप बिबेकी परम सुजाना॥
करइ जे धरम करम मन बानी।
बासुदेव अर्पित नृप ग्यानी॥
२ चढ़ि बर बाजि बार एक राजा।
मृगया कर सब साजि समाजा॥
बिंध्याचल गभीर बन गयऊ।
मृग पुनीत बहु मारत भयऊ॥
३ फिरत बिपिन नृप दीख बराहू।
जनु बन दुरेउ ससिहि ग्रसि राहू॥
बड़ बिधु नहिं समात मुख माहीं।
मनहुँ क्रोध बस उगिलत नाहीं॥
४ कोल कराल दसन छबि गाई।
तनु बिसाल पीवर अधिकाई॥
घुरुघुरात हय आरौ पाएँ।
चकित बिलोकत कान उठाएँ॥

१५६ नील महीधर सिखर सम देखि बिसाल बराहु।
चपरि चलेउ हय सुटुकि नृप हाँकि न होइ निबाहु॥

Each and every sacrifice enjoined 155
by the Vedas and *purāṇas*
the king zealously performed
thousands upon thousands of times.

In his heart the king craved no rewards 1
for he was most discerning and wise.
His every act, in words, deeds, or thoughts
that wise king offered to Lord Vasudev.
One day, the king mounted a splendid horse 2
and set out with a full hunting party
for the dense forest of Vindhyachal
where he killed many fine deer.[43]
Roaming the forest, he spied a great boar, 3
like Rahu* hiding in a wood after seizing the crescent
moon,
which was too big to fit in his maw
but which, in his fury, he refused to disgorge.
Such was the splendor of that boar's tusks, 4
and his body, too, was huge and fleshy.
When he heard the horse, he snorted
and grew alert and watchful, ears erect.

Spying that gigantic boar, like the summit 156
of a dark mountain,
the king instantly goaded his horse forward,
lest the prey escape.[44]

* The eclipse demon.

१ आवत देखि अधिक रव बाजी।
चलेउ बराह मरुत गति भाजी॥
तुरत कीन्ह नृप सर संधाना।
महि मिलि गयउ बिलोकत बाना॥
२ तकि तकि तीर महीस चलावा।
करि छल सुअर सरीर बचावा॥
प्रगटत दुरत जाइ मृप भागा।
रिस बस भूप चलेउ सँग लागा॥
३ गयउ दूरि घन गहन बराहू।
जहँ नाहिन गज बाजि निबाहू॥
अति अकेल बन बिपुल कलेसू।
तदपि न मृप मग तजइ नरेसू॥
४ कोल बिलोकि भूप बड़ धीरा।
भागि पैठ गिरिगुहाँ गभीरा॥
अगम देखि नृप अति पछिताई।
फिरेउ महाबन परेउ भुलाई॥

१५७ खेद खिन्न छुद्धित तृषित राजा बाजि समेत।
खोजत ब्याकुल सरित सर जल बिनु भयउ अचेत॥

१ फिरत बिपिन आश्रम एक देखा।
तहँ बस नृपति कपट मुनिबेषा॥
जासु देस नृप लीन्ह छड़ाई।
समर सेन तजि गयउ पराई॥

When he saw the horse noisily advancing, 1
the boar fled with the speed of the wind.
The king quickly fitted an arrow to his bow,
but seeing it, the boar crouched to the ground.
Though the king aimed and fired repeatedly, 2
the wily boar managed to save his skin
and escaped, alternately hiding and showing himself,
with the king, gripped by anger, in pursuit.
The boar ran far away, into dense forest 3
where elephant and horse could not penetrate.
Though all alone amid the perils of the wild,
the king did not abandon his chase.
Seeing the king's resolve, the black boar 4
fled into a deep mountain cave.
Seeing no way in, the king regretfully
turned back, only to get lost in the vast wood.

Exhausted and stricken by hunger and thirst, 157
the king and his horse
desperately sought a river or pond,
delirious for want of water.

Wandering the forest, he saw an ashram 1
where, disguised as a sage, a king dwelled
whose realm Pratapbhanu had seized,
and who abandoned his troops and fled the field.

२ समय प्रतापभानु कर जानी।
आपन अति असमय अनुमानी॥
गयउ न गृह मन बहुत गलानी।
मिला न राजहि नृप अभिमानी॥
३ रिस उर मारि रंक जिमि राजा।
बिपिन बसइ तापस कें साजा॥
तासु समीप गवन नृप कीन्हा।
यह प्रतापरबि तेहिं तब चीन्हा॥
४ राउ तृषित नहिं सो पहिचाना।
देखि सुबेष महामुनि जाना॥
उतरि तुरग तें कीन्ह प्रनामा।
परम चतुर न कहेउ निज नामा॥

१५८ भूपति तृषित बिलोकि तेहिं सरबरु दीन्ह देखाइ।
मज्जन पान समेत हय कीन्ह नृपति हरषाइ॥

१ गै श्रम सकल सुखी नृप भयऊ।
निज आश्रम तापस लै गयऊ॥
आसन दीन्ह अस्त रबि जानी।
पुनि तापस बोलेउ मृदु बानी॥
२ को तुम्ह कस बन फिरहु अकेलें।
सुंदर जुबा जीव परहेलें॥
चक्रबर्ति के लच्छन तोरें।
देखत दया लागि अति मोरें॥

Seeing that the day was Pratapbhanu's 2
and reckoning himself most unlucky,
he was too depressed to go home
but too proud to meet the conqueror.
Suppressing his rage like a pauper, that king 3
began living in the forest in ascetic guise.
Now when the king approached,
he knew at once, "It's him, Pratapbhanu!"
But the thirst-crazed king did not recognize him 4
and seeing his disguise, thought him a great sage.
Dismounting his horse, he paid him reverence
but astutely avoided saying his own name.

Perceiving the lord of the earth to be thirsty, 158
the sage guided him to a fine lake
where the delighted king bathed
and refreshed himself and his mount.

His weariness purged, the king was content, 1
and the ascetic brought him back to his retreat.
He seated him, knowing the sun would soon set
and then that austere one politely spoke.
"Who are you, and why do you roam alone 2
in the forest, heedless of your young life?
You bear the marks of an emperor
and seeing you, I feel deep compassion."

३ नाम प्रतापभानु अवनीसा।
तासु सचिव मैं सुनहु मुनीसा॥
फिरत अहेरें परेउँ भुलाई।
बड़ें भाग देखेउँ पद आई॥
४ हम कहँ दुर्लभ दरस तुम्हारा।
जानत हौं कछु भल होनिहारा॥
कह मुनि तात भयउ अँधिआरा।
जोजन सत्तरि नगरु तुम्हारा॥

१५९क निसा घोर गंभीर बन पंथ न सुनहु सुजान।
बसहु आजु अस जानि तुम्ह जाएहु होत बिहान॥

१५९ख तुलसी जसि भवतब्यता तैसी मिलइ सहाइ।
आपुनु आवइ ताहि पहिं ताहि तहाँ लै जाइ॥

१ भलेहिं नाथ आयसु धरि सीसा।
बाँधि तुरग तरु बैठ महीसा॥
नृप बहु भाँति प्रसंसेउ ताही।
चरन बंदि निज भाग्य सराही॥
२ पुनि बोलेउ मृदु गिरा सुहाई।
जानि पिता प्रभु करउँ ढिठाई॥
मोहि मुनीस सुत सेवक जानी।
नाथ नाम निज कहहु बखानी॥

The king said, "There is a ruler named Pratapbhanu 3
and I am his minister, lordly sage.
While out hunting, I became lost
but by great fortune, I came to your feet.
Your audience is rare and precious 4
and augurs well for me, I think."
The sage said, "Son, darkness falls,
and your city is seventy leagues[45] away.

Listen, wise one: night is dreadful 159a
and the forest dense and pathless.
Considering this, stay here tonight
and leave at break of dawn."

Tulsi says: one gets precisely the help 159b
that inexorable fate ordains.
Either it comes to you on its own,
or else it leads you there.[46]

"Yes, master"—humbly accepting the order, 1
the king tied his horse to a tree and sat down.
He offered fulsome homage to his host,
saluting his feet and praising his own fortune.
Then he spoke with sweet eloquence, 2
"Lord, regarding you as a father, I venture to inquire.
Think of me, best of sages, as your son and servant
and reveal your name to me, master."

३ तेहि न जान नृप नृपहि सो जाना।
भूप सुहृद सो कपट सयाना॥
बैरी पुनि छत्री पुनि राजा।
छल बल कीन्ह चहइ निज काजा॥
४ समुझि राजसुख दुखित अराती।
अवाँ अनल इव सुलगइ छाती॥
सरल बचन नृप के सुनि काना।
बयर सँभारि हृदयँ हरषाना॥

१६० कपट बोरि बानी मृदुल बोलेउ जुगुति समेत।
नाम हमार भिखारि अब निर्धन रहित निकेत॥

१ कह नृप जे बिग्यान निधाना।
तुम्ह सारिखे गलित अभिमाना॥
सदा रहहिं अपनपौ दुराएँ।
सब बिधि कुसल कुबेष बनाएँ॥
२ तेहि तें कहहिं संत श्रुति टेरें।
परम अकिंचन प्रिय हरि केरें॥
तुम्ह सम अधन भिखारि अगेहा।
होत बिरंचि सिवहि संदेहा॥
३ जोसि सोसि तव चरन नमामी।
मो पर कृपा करिअ अब स्वामी॥
सहज प्रीति भूपति कै देखी।
आपु बिषय बिस्वास बिसेषी॥

The king did not recognize him, but he knew the king. 3
The one was pure-hearted, the other steeped in guile—
an enemy of warrior caste, moreover, a king
who pursued his end by the power of deceit.
Recalling royal pleasures, that foe felt wretched 4
and his breast smoldered like fire in a kiln.
Hearing the king's innocent address,
he rejoiced inwardly, suppressing his hatred.

In a sweet voice steeped in guile, 160
he spoke with cunning intent.
"Now my name is merely 'Beggar,'
for I am without wealth or home."

The king said, "A treasury of wisdom 1
like you, whose pride has melted away,
always lives in concealment,
rejoicing in lowly guise.
Hence the Vedas and holy ones proclaim 2
that the most destitute are dearest to Hari.
A poor, homeless mendicant like yourself
gives pause even to Brahma and Shiva.[47]
Whoever you may be, I bow before you, 3
and beseech you, master, to show mercy to me."
Perceiving the king's spontaneous love
and powerful faith in him,

४ सब प्रकार राजहि अपनाई।
बोलेउ अधिक सनेह जनाई॥
सुनु सतिभाउ कहउँ महिपाला।
इहाँ बसत बीते बहु काला॥

१६१क अब लगि मोहि न मिलेउ कोउ मैं न जनावउँ काहु।
लोकमान्यता अनल सम कर तप कानन दाहु॥

१६१ख तुलसी देखि सुबेषु भूलहिं मूढ़ न चतुर नर।
सुंदर केकिहि पेखु बचन सुधा सम असन अहि॥

१ तातें गुपुत रहउँ जग माहीं।
हरि तजि किमपि प्रयोजन नाहीं॥
प्रभु जानत सब बिनहिं जनाएँ।
कहहु कवनि सिधि लोक रिझाएँ॥
२ तुम्ह सुचि सुमति परम प्रिय मोरें।
प्रीति प्रतीति मोहि पर तोरें॥
अब जौं तात दुरावउँ तोही।
दारुन दोष घटइ अति मोही॥
३ जिमि जिमि तापसु कथइ उदासा।
तिमि तिमि नृपहि उपज बिस्वासा॥
देखा स्वबस कर्म मन बानी।
तब बोला तापस बगध्यानी॥

he drew the king wholly into his power, 4
speaking with a great show of affection:
"Listen, lord of the earth, I tell you truly,
I have lived here for a very long time.

Till now, no one has found me, nor have I 161a
revealed myself to anyone,
for worldly fame is like fire that consumes
the forest of ascetic disciplines."

Tulsi says, at the sight of a good disguise, not just fools, 161b
but even clever men are duped.
Look at the lovely peacock: its call is nectar-like,
but its diet is vipers!

"And so," said the sage, "I live hidden amid the world, 1
and concern myself with no one but Hari.
The Lord knows all without being told,
and what is won by pandering to the masses?
Being pure and wise, you are most dear to me, 2
and you show love and faith.
So now, to conceal anything from you, my son,
would seem to me a grievous sin."
The more the ascetic expounded his detachment, 3
the more the king's confidence in him grew.
When he saw that he was wholly in his grip,
that mendacious meditator[48] declared,

४ नाम हमार एकतनु भाई।
सुनि नृप बोलेउ पुनि सिरु नाई॥
कहहु नाम कर अरथ बखानी।
मोहि सेवक अति आपन जानी॥

१६२ आदिसृष्टि उपजी जबहिं तब उतपति भै मोरि।
नाम एकतनु हेतु तेहि देह न धरी बहोरि॥

१ जनि आचरजु करहु मन माहीं।
सुत तप तें दुर्लभ कछु नाहीं॥
तपबल तें जग सृजइ बिधाता।
तपबल बिष्नु भए परित्राता॥
२ तपबल संभु करहिं संघारा।
तप तें अगम न कछु संसारा॥
भयउ नृपहि सुनि अति अनुरागा।
कथा पुरातन कहै सो लागा॥
३ करम धरम इतिहास अनेका।
करइ निरूपन बिरति बिबेका॥
उदभव पालन प्रलय कहानी।
कहेसि अमित आचरज बखानी॥
४ सुनि महीप तापस बस भयऊ।
आपन नाम कहन तब लयऊ॥
कह तापस नृप जानउँ तोही।
कीन्हेहु कपट लाग भल मोही॥

"Brother, my name is Ektanu, 'one-body.'" 4
The king heard and repeated it, bowing his head:
"Kindly explain the meaning of your name,
considering me your sworn servant."

The ascetic said, "When primordial creation 162
first emerged, I took birth.
My name is Ektanu simply because
I have never assumed another form.

Do not be astonished, my son, 1
for nothing is out of reach to asceticism.
By its power, Brahma spawns the world,
by its power, Vishnu becomes its savior,
and by its power, Shambhu destroys it. 2
With asceticism, nothing in the world is unattainable!"
Listening, the king felt intense devotion,
and the other launched into ancient tales.
With myriad accounts of duty and dharma 3
he elucidated knowledge and detachment.
Of cosmic creation, life, and dissolution
he expounded countless marvels.
Hearing this, the king came under his spell 4
and started to reveal his own name.
But the ascetic said, "King, I know you well,
and your deception actually pleased me.

१६३ सुनु महीस असि नीति जहँ तहँ नाम न कहहिं नृप।
मोहि तोहि पर अति प्रीति सोइ चतुरता बिचारि तव॥

१ नाम तुम्हार प्रताप दिनेसा।
सत्यकेतु तव पिता नरेसा॥
गुर प्रसाद सब जानिअ राजा।
कहिअ न आपन जानि अकाजा॥
२ देखि तात तव सहज सुधाई।
प्रीति प्रतीति नीति निपुनाई॥
उपजि परी ममता मन मोरें।
कहउँ कथा निज पूछे तोरें॥
३ अब प्रसन्न मैं संसय नाहीं।
मागु जो भूप भाव मन माहीं॥
सुनि सुबचन भूपति हरषाना।
गहि पद बिनय कीन्हि बिधि नाना॥
४ कृपासिंधु मुनि दरसन तोरें।
चारि पदारथ करतल मोरें॥
प्रभुहि तथापि प्रसन्न बिलोकी।
मागि अगम बर होउँ असोकी॥

१६४ जरा मरन दुख रहित तनु समर जितै जनि कोउ।
एकछत्र रिपुहीन महि राज कलप सत होउ॥

For it is prudent policy of kings not to broadcast 163
their identity abroad.
Lord of earth, reflecting on your shrewdness,
I am even more fond of you.

You are named 'Pratapbhanu,' valor's sun, 1
and your father was that ruler of men, Satyaketu.
King, by my guru's grace, I know all,
but also know when best not to tell.
Perceiving your natural goodness, son, 2
your loving trust and shrewd statecraft,
great affection has arisen in my heart
and I have told my story at your request.
Now be sure that I am well disposed, 3
king, and ask a boon pleasing to your heart."
Rejoicing at this amiable speech, the king
clasped the sage's feet and praised him greatly.
"Ocean of mercy! From the mere sight of you, sage, 4
the four rewards[49] have fallen into my palm.
Yet, seeing you well pleased, lord,
I ask a rare boon, one to end all sorrow:

with my body free of disease, death, and pain, 164
may none ever best me in battle,
and may I reign as unchallenged emperor[50] of earth
for a hundred aeons!"

१ कह तापस नृप ऐसेइ होऊ।
कारन एक कठिन सुनु सोऊ॥
कालउ तुअ पद नाइहि सीसा।
एक बिप्रकुल छाड़ि महीसा॥
२ तपबल बिप्र सदा बरिआरा।
तिन्ह के कोप न कोउ रखवारा॥
जौं बिप्रन्ह बस करहु नरेसा।
तौ तुअ बस बिधि बिष्नु महेसा॥
३ चल न ब्रह्मकुल सन बरिआई।
सत्य कहउँ दोउ भुजा उठाई॥
बिप्र श्राप बिनु सुनु महिपाला।
तोर नास नहिं कवनेहुँ काला॥
४ हरषेउ राउ बचन सुनि तासू।
नाथ न होइ मोर अब नासू॥
तव प्रसाद प्रभु कृपानिधाना।
मो कहुँ सर्ब काल कल्याना॥

१६५ एवमस्तु कहि कपट मुनि बोला कुटिल बहोरि।
मिलब हमार भुलाब निज कहहु त हमहि न खोरि॥

१ तातें मैं तोहि बरजउँ राजा।
कहें कथा तव परम अकाजा॥
छठें श्रवन यह परत कहानी।
नास तुम्हार सत्य मम बानी॥

The ascetic said, "So it can be, king, 1
but listen, there is just one complication.
Even death may grovel at your feet,
but not the Brahman clans, lord of earth,
who are mighty by the power of asceticism. 2
From their anger, none can shield you,
but bring these seers under your sway,
and you will control Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva!
Yet force can never work with Brahmans— 3
this truth I swear, with arms upraised!
Unless a Brahman curse you, earth-protector,
you will not be destroyed in any age."
The king rejoiced on hearing this. 4
"Master, now I will be indestructible!
Through your grace, most merciful lord,
all times will be propitious for me."

"May it be so!" declared the false ascetic, 165
and with wily words spoke again.
"But if you ever tell anyone of losing your way and of our meeting,
do not come blaming me!

I warn you not to do this, king, 1
for to tell this tale would be your undoing.
If this reaches a third party's hearing,
then, I swear, you will be ruined.

२ यह प्रगटें अथवा द्विजश्रापा।
नास तोर सुनु भानुप्रतापा॥
आन उपायँ निधन तव नाहीं।
जौं हरि हर कोपहिं मन माहीं॥
३ सत्य नाथ पद गहि नृप भाषा।
द्विज गुर कोप कहहु को राखा॥
राखइ गुर जौं कोप बिधाता।
गुर बिरोध नहिं कोउ जग त्राता॥
४ जौं न चलब हम कहे तुम्हारें।
होउ नास नहिं सोच हमारें॥
एकहिं डर डरपत मन मोरा।
प्रभु महिदेव श्राप अति घोरा॥

१६६ होहिं बिप्र बस कवन बिधि कहहु कृपा करि सोउ।
तुम्ह तजि दीनदयाला निज हितू न देखउँ कोउ॥

१ सुनु नृप बिबिध जतन जग माहीं।
कष्टसाध्य पुनि होहिं कि नाहीं॥
अहइ एक अति सुगम उपाई।
तहाँ परंतु एक कठिनाई॥
२ मम आधीन जुगुति नृप सोई।
मोर जाब तव नगर न होई॥
आजु लगें अरु जब तें भयऊँ।
काहू के गृह ग्राम न गयऊँ॥

Only by revealing this, or by a Brahman's curse, 2
can you be destroyed, Pratapbhanu.
No other means can cause your death,
not even the wrath of Vishnu and Shiva!"
The king bowed and said, "How true, master. 3
Who can save one from the twice-born and guru's ire?
A guru guards you even from the rage of Brahma,
but defy a guru, and you find no savior in this world.
If I fail to follow your instructions 4
I will be destroyed—this does not worry me.
But one dread does trouble my heart:
the awful curse of those gods on earth!

By what means may Brahmans be controlled? 166
Be so kind as to tell me this,
for aside from you, merciful one,
I see no other benefactor."

The ascetic said, "There are many ways to do this, king, 1
but complicated and unsure in outcome.
Let's see ... there is one very simple expedient
though it, too, presents a difficulty.
For the scheme depends on me, lord of men, 2
and it is impossible for me to go to your city.
Since I came into being and until now
I have never gone to anyone's home or town,

३ जौं न जाउँ तव होइ अकाजू।
बना आइ असमंजस आजू॥
सुनि महीस बोलेउ मृदु बानी।
नाथ निगम असि नीति बखानी॥
४ बड़े सनेह लघुन्ह पर करहीं।
गिरि निज सिरनि सदा तृन धरहीं॥
जलधि अगाध मौलि बह फेनू।
संतत धरनि धरत सिर रेनू॥

१६७ अस कहि गहे नरेस पद स्वामी होहु कृपाल।
मोहि लागि दुख सहिअ प्रभु सज्जन दीनदयाल॥

१ जानि नृपहि आपन आधीना।
बोला तापस कपट प्रबीना॥
सत्य कहउँ भूपति सुनु तोही।
जग नाहिन दुर्लभ कछु मोही॥
२ अवसि काज मैं करिहउँ तोरा।
मन तन बचन भगत तैं मोरा॥
जोग जुगुति तप मंत्र प्रभाऊ।
फलइ तबहिं जब करिअ दुराऊ॥
३ जौं नरेस मैं करौं रसोई।
तुम्ह परुसहु मोहि जान न कोई॥
अन्न सो जोइ जोइ भोजन करई।
सोइ सोइ तव आयसु अनुसरई॥

yet if I do not go, your task remains undone. 3
What a dilemma has arisen today!"
Hearing him, the king said sweetly,
"Master, the Veda advocates
that the great take pity on the humble. 4
Mountains ever support grass on their summits,
scum streaks the crown of fathomless ocean,
and earth eternally bears dust on her brow."

Then the lord of men clasped the ascetic's feet 167
and cried, "Be merciful, master!
Endure pain for my sake, lord, for you are
a benefactor of the wretched!"

Realizing the king was in his power, 1
that ascetic, adept at guile, spoke—
"Listen, lord of earth. I tell you truly,
nothing in this world is beyond me.
I will assuredly accomplish your task, 2
for you are in all ways devoted to me.
But yoga, stratagem, penance, and mantra
bear fruit only when practiced in secret.
If I prepare cooked food, king, 3
and you serve it, with no one knowing me,
whoever partakes of that meal
will follow your dictates.

४ पुनि तिन्ह के गृह जेवँइ जोऊ।
तव बस होइ भूप सुनु सोऊ॥
जाइ उपाय रचहु नृप एहू।
संबत भरि संकलप करेहू॥

१६८ नित नूतन द्विज सहस सत बरेहु सहित परिवार।
मैं तुम्हरे संकलप लगि दिनहिं करबि जेवनार॥

१ एहि बिधि भूप कष्ट अति थोरें।
होइहहिं सकल बिप्र बस तोरें॥
करिहहिं बिप्र होम मख सेवा।
तेहिं प्रसंग सहजेहिं बस देवा॥
२ और एक तोहि कहउँ लखाऊ।
मैं एहिं बेष न आउब काऊ॥
तुम्हरे उपरोहित कहुँ राया।
हरि आनब मैं करि निज माया॥
३ तपबल तेहि करि आपु समाना।
रखिहउँ इहाँ बरष परवाना॥
मैं धरि तासु बेषु सुनु राजा।
सब बिधि तोर सँवारब काजा॥
४ गै निसि बहुत सयन अब कीजे।
मोहि तोहि भूप भेंट दिन तीजे॥
मैं तपबल तोहि तुरग समेता।
पहुँचैहउँ सोवतहि निकेता॥

Further, anyone who then dines in their homes 4
will likewise come under your sway, king!
Go, lord of men, and so arrange
to promulgate a vow lasting for one year,

that each day you will invite anew 168
a hundred thousand Brahmans and their kin.
And I myself, for the duration of your vow,
will daily prepare a feast.

Thus, your highness, with so little effort 1
all Brahmans will be in your power
and will perform fire oblations and worship
by which you will easily control the gods, too.
And let me tell you another sign: 2
I will not come to you in this guise,
king, but rather as your own family priest,
whom I will abduct through my magic
and, by my power of asceticism, take his likeness, 3
keeping him here for a year's time.
And I, your majesty, wearing his guise,
will fully accomplish your desired task.
But it is very late, so go to sleep now. 4
We will meet in three days, king, after I,
by my ascetic power, bring you and your horse,
while yet asleep, to your abode.

१६९ मैं आउब सोइ बेषु धरि पहिचानेहु तब मोहि।
जब एकांत बोलाइ सब कथा सुनावौं तोहि॥

१ सयन कीन्ह नृप आयसु मानी।
आसन जाइ बैठ छलग्यानी॥
श्रमित भूप निद्रा अति आई।
सो किमि सोव सोच अधिकाई॥
२ कालकेतु निसिचर तहँ आवा।
जेहिं सूकर होइ नृपहि भुलावा॥
परम मित्र तापस नृप केरा।
जानइ सो अति कपट घनेरा॥
३ तेहि के सत सुत अरु दस भाई।
खल अति अजय देव दुखदाई॥
प्रथमहिं भूप समर सब मारे।
बिप्र संत सुर देखि दुखारे॥
४ तेहिं खल पाछिल बयरु सँभारा।
तापस नृप मिलि मंत्र बिचारा॥
जेहिं रिपु छय सोइ रचेन्हि उपाऊ।
भावी बस न जान कछु राऊ॥

१७० रिपु तेजसी अकेल अपि लघु करि गनिअ न ताहु।
अजहुँ देत दुख रबि ससिहि सिर अवसेषित राहु॥

I will come to you, having taken on the promised form, 169
and you will know me
when I summon you to secret council
and recount this whole incident."

The king went to bed, heeding the order, 1
and the false saint resumed his seat.
The tired ruler fell into deep slumber,
but how could that anxious schemer rest?
Demon Kalketu, "Death-flag," came there, 2
he who, as a boar, had led the king astray.
A great friend of the royal hermit,
he knew every sort of deception.
His hundred sons and ten brothers 3
were mighty scoundrels who oppressed heaven
until Pratapbhanu slew them in battle,
seeing the suffering of Brahmans, saints, and gods.
That scoundrel, nursing his old enmity 4
now met the royal recluse to plot
and devise a plan to destroy their foe.
By fate's power, the king knew nothing of this.

Even if he is alone, a powerful enemy 170
should never be underestimated.
Till today, sun and moon are assailed by Rahu,
though only his head remains.

१ तापस नृप निज सखहि निहारी।
हरषि मिलेउ उठि भयउ सुखारी॥
मित्रहि कहि सब कथा सुनाई।
जातुधान बोला सुख पाई॥
२ अब साधेउँ रिपु सुनहु नरेसा।
जौं तुम्ह कीन्ह मोर उपदेसा॥
परिहरि सोच रहहु तुम्ह सोई।
बिनु औषध बिआधि बिधि खोई॥
३ कुल समेत रिपु मूल बहाई।
चौथें दिवस मिलब मैं आई॥
तापस नृपहि बहुत परितोषी।
चला महाकपटी अतिरोषी॥
४ भानुप्रतापहि बाजि समेता।
पहुँचाएसि छन माझ निकेता॥
नृपहि नारि पहिं सयन कराई।
हय गृहँ बाँधेसि बाजि बनाई॥

१७१ राजा के उपरोहितहि हरि लै गयउ बहोरि।
लै राखेसि गिरि खोह महुँ मायाँ करि मति भोरि॥

१ आपु बिरचि उपरोहित रूपा।
परेउ जाइ तेहि सेज अनूपा॥
जागेउ नृप अनभएँ बिहाना।
देखि भवन अति अचरजु माना॥

The hermit king saw his friend 1
and merrily rose to receive him.
He told him all that had happened
and the delighted demon replied,
"Now, king, our enemy is done for 2
if you just carry out my instructions.
You may sleep without a care,
for fate has handed us a cure for our ills![51]
After I destroy our foe and his family, 3
I will return to you four days hence."
Having much soothed the royal recluse,
that great deceiver left, seething with rage.
He took Pratapbhanu and his horse 4
and in an instant delivered them home.
He laid the king near his wife
and secured the horse in the stable.

Then he snatched up the king's household priest, 171
carried him off,
and stowed him in a mountain cave,
deluding his wits by magic.

He molded himself to the priest's form 1
and lay down on his fine bed.
The king awoke well before dawn,
wonderstruck on seeing his home.

२ मुनि महिमा मन महुँ अनुमानी।
उठेउ गवँहिं जेहिं जान न रानी॥
कानन गयउ बाजि चढ़ि तेहिं।
पुर नर नारि न जानेउ केहीं॥
३ गएँ जाम जुग भूपति आवा।
घर घर उत्सव बाज बधावा॥
उपरोहितहि देख जब राजा।
चकित बिलोक सुमिरि सोइ काजा॥
४ जुग सम नृपहि गए दिन तीनी।
कपटी मुनि पद रह मति लीनी॥
समय जानि उपरोहित आवा।
नृपहि मते सब कहि समुझावा॥

१७२ नृप हरषेउ पहिचानि गुरु भ्रम बस रहा न चेत।
बरे तुरत सत सहस बर बिप्र कुटुंब समेत॥

१ उपरोहित जेवनार बनाई।
छरस चारि बिधि जसि श्रुति गाई॥
मायामय तेहिं कीन्हि रसोई।
बिंजन बहु गनि सकइ न कोई॥
२ बिबिध मृगन्ह कर आमिष राँधा।
तेहि महुँ बिप्र माँसु खल साँधा॥
भोजन कहुँ सब बिप्र बोलाए।
पद पखारि सादर बैठाए॥

Musing on that sage's greatness, 2
he rose quietly, unknown to his queen.
Mounting the same horse, he went to the forest
without any of the city folk knowing.
When two watches had passed, he entered the city 3
to fanfare and rejoicing in every home.
When the king saw his household priest,
he stared in wonder, recalling those events.
The three days passed like an aeon, 4
the king's mind at the mercy of the false sage.
When it was time, the priest came
and disclosed all those secrets to the king.

Delighted to recognize his guru, 172
the king became witless in delusion's grip
and instantly invited a hundred thousand
eminent Brahmans and their kin.

The royal priest prepared a great meal 1
of fourfold foods and six flavors, as texts prescribe.
It was a feast replete with magic
and more ingredients than anyone could count.
He cooked the meat of many animals, 2
but into it the scoundrel mixed Brahman flesh.
All the seers were summoned to dine,
had their feet washed, and were reverently seated.

३ परुसन जबहिं लाग महिपाला।
भै अकासबानी तेहि काला॥
बिप्रबृंद उठि उठि गृह जाहू।
है बड़ि हानि अन्न जनि खाहू॥
४ भयउ रसोईं भूसुर माँसू।
सब द्विज उठे मानि बिस्वासू॥
भूप बिकल मति मोहँ भुलानी।
भावी बस न आव मुख बानी॥

१७३ बोले बिप्र सकोप तब नहिं कछु कीन्ह बिचार।
जाइ निसाचर होहु नृप मूढ़ सहित परिवार॥

१ छत्रबंधु तैं बिप्र बोलाई।
घालै लिए सहित समुदाई॥
ईस्वर राखा धरम हमारा।
जैहसि तैं समेत परिवारा॥
२ संबत मध्य नास तव होऊ।
जलदाता न रहिहि कुल कोऊ॥
नृप सुनि श्राप बिकल अति त्रासा।
भै बहोरि बर गिरा अकासा॥
३ बिप्रहु श्राप बिचारि न दीन्हा।
नहिं अपराध भूप कछु कीन्हा॥
चकित बिप्र सब सुनि नभबानी।
भूप गयउ जहँ भोजन खानी॥

But just as the king began serving them 3
a celestial voice was heard, declaring,
"Brahman clans, arise and hurry home.
This food is gravely flawed. Do not eat
this meal of meat of the earth's own gods!" 4
Heeding this, all the twice-born arose.
The king was distraught, but so confounded
that by fate's power he could not say a word.

Then the Brahmans spoke out in fury, 173
without a moment's reflection,
"Royal fool, go and become a night-stalker
along with your kinsmen!

Brother Kshatriya![52] You summoned seers 1
to ruin us, together with our clans.
But God has guarded our dharma,
and you and your kin are destroyed.
Within a year, your ruin will come, 2
leaving none in your line to offer water to the dead!"
Hearing the curse, the king was terror-stricken.
Then the great voice again came from the sky:
"Brahmans, you did not think before cursing, 3
for the king has done no misdeed."
They all were astonished by this utterance.
The king hurried to the royal kitchen

४ तहँ न असन नहिं बिप्र सुआरा।
फिरेउ राउ मन सोच अपारा॥
सब प्रसंग महिसुरन्ह सुनाई।
त्रसित परेउ अवनीं अकुलाई॥

१७४ भूपति भावी मिटइ नहिं जदपि न दूषन तोर।
किएँ अन्यथा होइ नहिं बिप्रश्राप अति घोर॥

१ अस कहि सब महिदेव सिधाए।
समाचार पुरलोगन्ह पाए॥
सोचहिं दूषन दैवहि देहीं।
बिचरत हंस काग किय जेहीं॥
२ उपरोहितहि भवन पहुँचाई।
असुर तापसहि खबरि जनाई॥
तेहिं खल जहँ तहँ पत्र पठाए।
सजि सजि सेन भूप सब धाए॥
३ घेरेन्हि नगर निसान बजाई।
बिबिध भाँति नित होइ लराई॥
जूझे सकल सुभट करि करनी।
बंधु समेत परेउ नृप धरनी॥
४ सत्यकेतु कुल कोउ नहि बाँचा।
बिप्रश्राप किमि होइ असाँचा॥
रिपु जिति सब नृप नगर बसाई।
निज पुर गवने जय जसु पाई॥

but found neither food nor priestly chef. 4
He returned, his mind filled with anxiety,
recounted everything to those earthly gods,
and fell before them, frightened and confused.

The Brahmans said, "Lord of earth, destiny cannot be erased, 174
even though you were not at fault,
for no effort can undo
the awful curse of Brahman seers."

With this, all the Brahmans departed. 1
The news reached the citizens,
who grieved and railed against fate,
which, designing a holy *haṃsa,* had made a vile crow.
Delivering the royal priest to his abode, 2
the demon reported to the recluse.
That scoundrel sent letters here and there
and all hostile kings raised armies and hurried forth.
Sounding their drums, they surrounded the city 3
and many protracted battles ensued.
Pratapbhanu's champions died fighting bravely,
and the king and his brothers fell on the field.
In Satyaketu's clan, not one was spared, 4
for how could the Brahmans' curse prove false?
Having defeated their foe, the kings colonized the city
and went home with victory and fame.

१७५ भरद्वाज सुनु जाहि जब होइ बिधाता बाम।
धूरि मेरुसम जनक जम ताहि ब्यालसम दाम॥

Hear well, Bharadvaj: when fate turns hostile 175
to someone, a speck of dust
becomes like Meru, his own father, Yama,[53]
and a garland, a deadly serpent.

NOTES TO THE TRANSLATION

Prologue

Although some early manuscripts of the poem show no divisions except into its seven "stairs," modern printed editions use the *kāṇḍ* or sub-book names that have become traditional. Within these sub-books, they often create section headings to distinguish various thematic episodes (*prasaṅg*). This convention is adopted here, though with fewer such headings than in some popular editions.

1 The first seven verses are an "auspicious benediction" (*maṅgalācaraṇa*) in Sanskrit. In the first, Vani—literally, "speech, voice"—is personified as Sarasvati, goddess of art and learning; Tulsidas invokes Ganesh as Vinayaka, leader of the hordes of spirits in Shiva's entourage.

2 Parvati is invoked as the embodiment of *śraddhā* and Shiva of *viśvāsa;* both words connote "faith" but are, respectively, feminine and masculine.

3 The crescent moon, as seen on nights immediately before and after the new moon, is *vakra* ("curved" or "crooked," but also "dishonest, fraudulent"). Its reputation is saved because Shiva wears it in his matted locks.

4 "Demon," *asura;* this refers to the elder first cousins and rivals of the Vedic deities.

5 "Vedic texts and sacred treatises," *nigamāgama; nigama* refers to the orally transmitted Vedic corpus, and *āgama* to later Sanskrit ritual treatises.

6 The five opening couplets of the Hindi text (here numbered 0a through 0e) are in *soraṭhā* meter.

7 To whom is the second *soraṭhā* addressed? Since no deity is explicitly identified, some commentators believe that it continues the praise of Ganesh found in the first couplet, or anticipates that of Vishnu in the third. A few have argued that it is addressed to some other deity, such as Surya (the sun).

8 The generic "God" conceals an ambiguity in the original, for some manuscripts favor Hari (Vishnu) and others Hara (Shiva); a popular tradition, favoring the former, is that the phrase "Hari in human

form" (*nara rūpa hari*) alludes to the name of an actual guru of Tulsi's named Narahari Anand. Only the reading *hara,* however, yields the end rhyme found in other couplets in this series, and it is also consistent with Tulsi's reverence for Shiva as "world-guru" (Vaudeville 1955: 4–5).

9 Mirrors in Tulsidas's time were sheets of polished metal, hence his frequent references to them as tarnished, and to polishing or cleaning them with fine powder.

10 "Gods of this earth," *mahīsura;* although this compound is conventionally translated "Brahmans," here it may refer more broadly to saintly teachers, sadhus, and devotees of Ram, as succeeding lines suggest.

11 This extended simile presents a parallel between the deeds of sadhus and the plant that has been the source of much of India's prosperity. The "fruits" of both are "dry" ("juiceless," which for holy people implies the absence of passion), "white/pure," and "many-fibered," the latter term punning on two meanings of *guṇa*—"virtue/fiber." Cotton endures "pain" (in its picking and processing) to yield a product that covers and conceals the body's defects (as the deeds of the saintly atone for humanity's flaws). The word "sadhu" is now found in English with its conventional Indian meaning of "holy man," "ascetic." However, it should be noted that Tulsi often appears to use it interchangeably with *jana* (humble folk, common people), *bhagata* (devotee, adherent), and *santa* (saintly, good person) to refer to all those, whether ascetics or householders, who are devoted to Vishnu/Ram.

12 "King of pilgrim-sites," *tīrtharājū*; this refers to Prayag (modern Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh), the confluence of the three rivers Ganga, Yamuna, and (the invisible) Sarasvati.

13 The "undying banyan," *baṭu*; a legendary tree at Prayag that is supposed to survive the periodic dissolutions of the world.

14 The traditional "four aims" of human life: virtue, profit, pleasure, and spiritual liberation (*dharma, artha, kāma, mokṣa*).

15 The scavenger crow is considered an "untouchable" among birds; the fish-eating heron is scorned as a wily hunter. The *haṃsa* (often mistranslated as "swan" for the latter's associations with wildness, grace, and purity) is a legendary wild bird revered as emblematic of wisdom and the liberated soul. Often described as floating on or flying above Lake Manasarovar, it is said to feed on pearls and

to possess the ability to strain milk from water with its beak. It is sometimes identified as the bar-headed goose, which traverses the high Himalayas in its annual migrations.

16 Agastya is said to have been motherless and born from a vessel containing the semen of four Vedic deities. The line alludes to tales of how each of the three sages cited had benefited from saintly companionship.

17 The king cobra is believed to have a magic gem hidden in its hood. This gem is potent with spiritual power and partakes of none of the threatening qualities of the reptile (i.e., its venom).

18 The demigod Kuber presides over the gods' treasure in a Himalayan stronghold. Along with Rahu, Ketu is one of the two most inauspicious asterisms in Hindu astrology. Kumbhakaran, Ravan's monstrous elder brother, sleeps for six months at a time.

19 This invocation of the king of the Vedic gods (for whom, as will become clear, Tulsi has no great regard) contains an untranslatable pun, for the word *surā* can mean both "liquor" and "army." Indra is known to be fond of the former, but the second half of the *caupāī* can equally be rendered: "who always benefits from the gods' army" (which Indra commands).

20 In a popular myth, the churning of the primordial ocean by gods and demons yielded products that included the nectar of immortality, intoxicating liquor, and (according to later verses), world-destroying poison.

21 "Polluted stream," *kalimala sari;* literally, "the river of the pollution of the Kali age." Commentators associate this with the Karmanasha River in Bihar.

22 The river Karmanasha (destroyer of [virtuous] action) in modern Bihar and the kingdoms of Magadh (also in Bihar) and Marwar (in Rajasthan) were identified by traditional geographers as impure or inauspicious places.

23 Kalnemi will appear beginning at 6.56 as a demon dispatched by Ravan to trick Hanuman by assuming the guise of a sage. The demon Rahu posed as a god to quaff some of the nectar of immortality but was noticed by the sun and decapitated by Vishnu. His head (with nectar in its mouth) became immortal, and it periodically tries to swallow the sun and moon, causing an eclipse. Since he lacks a body, however, the sun and moon soon reemerge.

24 Commentators identify the four varieties of embodied beings as

egg-born, sweat-born, earth-born, and womb-born. Since, as will be clear in other passages, Tulsi regards his hero and heroine as male and female aspects of a supreme godhead, I will sometimes use the hyphenated compound "Sita-Ram" rather than "Sita and Ram."

25 Alternatively, this half line may be read, "Considering me your slave, merciful ones."

26 Ram is in the lineage of King Raghu, after whom his clan is named. Tulsi often calls him Raghubar (best of Raghus), Raghupati/Raghunath (lord of Raghus), Raghubir (Raghu hero), and Raghuray/Raghurao (king of the Raghus).

27 Literally, "in the world [for me] there's no [properly] curdled *chāch*." The latter beverage, a blend of curd and whey, is a byproduct of the churning of yogurt to make butter and ghee.

28 Some commentators prefer to read an implied double negative here, i.e., "Those with neither taste for poetry nor love for Ram's feet." However, the context seems to favor the reading I have given.

29 Literally, "and write on a blank page." Given the scarcity of paper in Tulsi's time, this signified a solemn oath.

30 The occurrence of the poet's signature in this lyrical quatrain, a convention in devotional poetry, may equally be read as a vocative ("Oh Tulsi"). The four-line *harigītikā chand* meter, of which this is the first instance, will be used at emotional or dramatic moments or to underscore an important assertion, often beginning with a rephrasing of the preceding line, and followed by a *dohā* or *soraṭhā*.

31 A legendary hill in southern India renowned for its trees, which yield fragrant sandalwood.

32 Elephants sometimes develop a pearl-like bone in their skull that is highly prized, and the king cobra is reputed to hide, in its hood, a wish-granting gem.

33 This is the first allusion to the metaphorical lake of Tulsi's title.

34 Sarasvati is likened to *svāti*, a lunar asterism during which a special dew is believed to fall to earth, seeding pearls in oysters.

35 A reference to a famous *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* passage (3.9.26) on the inadequacy of words or similes to describe the ultimate reality, which the text can signify only in negative terms, by *neti, neti* (not this, not that). Notably, in the Upanishad the words are spoken by the sage Yajnavalkya, whom Tulsi will make one of his four narrators (see 1.45.2).

36 This *ardhālī* contains a phrase adapted from Persian, *garība nevāja* (friend of the poor), best known as an epithet of the famous Sufi master Muinuddin Chishti of Ajmer. Likewise, Tulsi uses the Arabic-derived *sāhiba* for "master" in the second half line.

37 "Vyasa and Valmiki," *byāsa ādi kabi;* this may also be read as "from Vyasa onward," since the word *ādi* (first, primordial), used in Valmiki's epithet "first poet," is also used to mean "et cetera." Valmiki will also be separately venerated below (1.14d).

38 Tulsi plays on the names of two demons, Khar (harsh) and Dushan (blemish, flaw), who will be slain by Ram in *Araṇyakāṇḍ* (sub-book 3).

39 The fact that the traditional *śruti* texts of the Vedic tradition say nothing of the Raghu dynasty or Ram does not trouble Tulsi, for whom Ram is the supreme god and identical to Vishnu (whose name does appear in Vedic hymns).

40 This line may be construed as a list of those whom the poet venerates (guru, father, mother, Shiva, and Parvati), or (as some commentators prefer) as saluting Shiva and his consort as Tulsi's teacher and parents.

41 "Mantras," *śābara mantra;* this may refer to tantric formulas that were popular among the yogis of the Nath sect.

42 "Gift of grace," *pasāū;* such grace is usually embodied in a sanctified sweet or other food offered to a deity and then returned to and consumed by a worshiper. Tulsidas thus suggests the act of paying homage to Shiva and Parvati in a shrine.

43 Literally, "even in a dream."

44 "Sarayu," *Sarjū;* this river flows past modern Ayodhya and is ultimately said to have its source in Lake Manasarovar; see 1.39.12.

45 A reference to the story, traditionally included in Valmiki's seventh sub-book (but notably omitted from the *Mānas*) of the aspersions on Sita's character voiced by some townspeople, resulting in Ram's banishment of his pregnant wife. Later, when he departs the earth, Ram accords all living beings in Ayodhya a place in heaven.

46 Ram's birth mother, Kausalya, came from the eastern kingdom of Kosala.

47 King Janak, also known as Videha (name of a region, but also, literally, "bodiless"), is considered a sage-king, some of whose wisdom is recorded in the Upanishads.

48 Lakshman is considered an incarnation of Vishnu's thousand-headed cobra, Shesh, who supports the universe on his hoods.

49 The predatory *rākṣasas* or "demons" of the Rama story are often referred to as "night-stalkers." However, one of them, Ravan's virtuous brother Vibhishan, will become Ram's ally and devotee, and later their king.

50 To die in Kashi (Varanasi, or Banaras) is believed to give one release from rebirth. Tulsi asserts that this is owing to the power of Ram's name, imparted to the dying person by Shiva.

51 Tulsi alludes to a popular story in which Valmiki was originally a murderous highwayman who was eventually purified through the grace of sages who instructed him to recite the inauspicious mantra *marā, marā* (slain). Through constant repetition and the alternative parsing of syllables, this "impure" formula became *Rāma, Rāma* (on the origin of this story, see Leslie 2004).

52 This refers to Shiva's androgynous form as *ardhanārīśvara,* "the lord who is half woman."

53 In the syllabic Devanagari alphabet, used for both Sanskrit and Hindi, the name *rāma/rām* consists of the two syllables *rā* and *ma,* to whose graphemes Tulsi refers in succeeding verses.

54 Krishna and his brother Balram (who carries a plow) were raised by their foster mother, Yashoda.

55 The letters *r* and *m* have half or conjunct forms that appear as symbols (a curved line known as *ref* and a point or dot called *anusvār*) placed above the horizontal line below which most Devanagari characters are written.

56 A reference to the traditional five elements (earth, water, fire, air, and ether) believed to constitute creation.

57 The *Mānaspīyūṣ* favors a variant reading for this half line, found in several early manuscripts, that may be translated as "Elder devotees will understand what this servant means" (that is, they will not misconstrue his bold assertion in the previous verse).

58 When Tulsi invokes the upanishadic Absolute and not the creator-deity, I use a lowercase *b.*

59 "One ascetic woman": Ahalya, a sage's wife who was under a curse from which Ram released her. See 1.211, in Volume 2 of this translation.

60 "Suketu's daughter": Taraka, a demon woman slain by the youthful Ram. See 1.209.3, in Volume 2 of this translation.

61 This *caupāī* puns on the word "Bhava," which is both an epithet of Shiva and a noun commonly designating (illusory, transmigratory)

existence/life. Whereas the one is broken by incarnate Ram, the dread of the other is "broken" by his name.

62 In a popular tale, Shiva identifies the mantra "Ram" as the essence of the primordial, heavenly Ramayana, which consists of a billion verses.

63 Dhruv, a young prince persecuted by a stepmother, was blessed by Vishnu to become the pole star.

64 A reference to tales, celebrated in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* and other Vaishnava texts, in which sinners and lowly beings are saved by calling out one of Vishnu's names.

65 The tulsi plant, holy basil, sacred to Vaishnavas, is contrasted here with cannabis (*bhāṅg*), which—though disapproved of by some Vaishnavas—is especially popular among worshipers of Shiva.

66 Literally, "it is father and mother in this world."

67 In *Laṅkākāṇḍ,* Hanuman slays the demon Kalnemi, who is disguised as a holy man (6.57–58).

68 A reference to the incarnation of Vishnu as half man, half lion (*narasiṃha*), in which form he slew a demon called "golden garbed" (*hiraṇyakaśipu*) and rescued Vishnu's devotee, the demon's son Prahlad.

69 In a late-Vedic myth, the gods contribute a portion of their essence to create a special being to rule the chaotic human realm.

70 The crime was marrying an elder brother's wife.

71 I use the more familiar Sanskrit-derived spelling of the name of this Vedic sage, which is rendered Jāgbalik by Tulsidas.

72 "Dialogue" (*saṃvād*); by using this word for what he has just called a narrated "tale" (*kathā*), Tulsidas demonstrates the common Indian understanding that oral narrative unfolds in a dialogic process in which the listener also plays a role.

73 This interesting character will become the narrator of much of *Uttarkāṇḍ.*

74 The original refers to the *āmalaka* (aka *āṃvlā*), or myrobalan, a fruit roughly the size of an olive. This is a standard trope for something easily and fully understood.

75 Sanskrit: *Śūkarakṣetra,* "the boar's field," a pilgrimage place associated with Vishnu's incarnation as the boar Varaha.

76 *Bharanī* can mean a snakebite-curing mantra. However, it can also denote the female peacock, believed to especially relish poisonous snakes, yielding the reading, "His tale is a peahen to devour the

era's serpent." The second simile refers to the wooden device used to kindle fire for Vedic rituals.

77 The goddess and river Yamuna is the sister of Yama, god of death, and is said to be able to turn back his emissaries when they come to claim souls. In colloquial speech, to "blacken the face" of someone is to embarrass or dismiss him.

78 "Tulsī" is also considered to be a goddess who is married to Vishnu. The second half of the line contains the rhyming feminine noun *hulsī* (happiness, joy). Since popular tradition maintains that this was the name of Tulsi's mother, the line is commonly understood to mean "for Tulsidas, like the heart of mother Hulsi."

79 Aditi, wife of the divine sage Kashyap, is said to have given birth to the thirty-three celestial deities (Indra, Surya, etc.).

80 Chitrakut, on the Mandakini River, is the site of a period of Ram's forest exile. Its description begins at 2.132.2.

81 The sage Agastya (referred to as "pot-born" in this verse), is said to have drunk the ocean in order to expose and defeat demons hiding in its depths.

82 The *cakor* bird is a type of partridge said to feed only on the beams of the full moon.

83 Here, the "story" may refer to the ensuing tale of Shiva, Sati, and the latter's rebirth as Parvati, which is not generally combined with the Ram narrative.

84 The date, given according to the Vikram Era, corresponds to 1574 C.E. The ninth of the bright fortnight of Chaitra ("the gentle month," corresponding to March–April) is traditionally observed as Ram's birthday.

85 In asserting that Ayodhya gives liberation to those who die there, Tulsi puts it on a par with Kashi.

86 The word used for "mind" here is *mānas,* punning on the title, as the following lines explain.

87 "Landings," *ghāṭ;* a series of stairways or platforms giving access to a body of water.

88 "Stairs," *sopāna;* this means both "stair" and "stairway/staircase." The simile suggests less a natural lake than a quadrangular temple tank or stepwell, with symmetrically arranged descending stairways, and is often diagrammed in this way by commentators; see *Mānaspīyūṣ* 1.547.

89 This refers to the categorization of dominant sentiments found in

artistic works (erotic, humorous, violent, compassionate, heroic, frightening, disgusting, astonishing, and peaceful) as listed by classical aestheticians.

90 Some manuscripts substitute *druma* (tree) for *dama* (self-control), and hence read "compassion is a vine-covered canopy of trees."

91 In calling these birds *bicāre* (poor, unfortunate), Tulsi puns on the term's alternate meaning, "without sustenance" (*becāre*), since they do not find their accustomed food here.

92 "Three fires," *traya tāpa;* a common trope for afflictions having respectively psychological, divine (i.e., induced by the gods), and material causes.

93 Commentators offer varying identifications for these: e.g., "superior, average, and vile," and "the spiritually liberated, those seeking liberation, and the worldly-minded" (*Mānaspīyūṣ* 1.614).

94 A possible alternate reading ("meets it as the rivers Son and Mahanad") names a pair of rivers.

95 "Grace," *prasāda* (here in the spelling standard in modern Hindi; see n. 42). Again, Tulsi may have bowed to his personal Ram image and partaken of sanctified food from the altar.

The Story of Shiva and Bhavani

1 The second of the four recurring ages of Hindu cosmology, at the close of which Ram's incarnation occurs.

2 Literally, "Who can cause a branch to grow by reasoning?" This *caupāī* has acquired a proverbial use similar to the English saying "Man proposes, but God disposes."

3 Connoting power and energy, this is a feminine word, used to designate the animating life force of creation, as well as the female counterpart of a male deity.

4 That is, incest, since Shiva regards Sita and Ram as his divine parents.

5 A trance-like state of profound meditation, often associated with advanced yogic discipline.

6 Daksha, Sati's father, is a son of the creator-god and figures in the tale (about to be told) of a Vedic sacrifice insulting to Shiva that results in Sati's self-immolation. This popular story appears in many *purāṇas* but is not generally linked with the exploits of Ram. The preceding tale of Sati's delusion seems to be the innovation of Ram devotees.

7 "Lord of beings," *prajeśa* and *prajāpati* (lord of creatures), refers to a cosmogonic status roughly equivalent to that of the demiurge in Neoplatonic and Gnostic thought, although the *prajāpati* continues to exercise an administrative function once the cosmos has been made.

8 *Kinnara:* a semidivine being with the head of a horse; *siddha:* a perfected adept. "Heavenly minstrel" translates *gandharva,* another class of semidivine creatures.

9 The word *bicārī* permits two readings: "reflecting/pondering" (from the verb *vicārnā*), and "the poor/wretched woman" (from *becārī*). Hence the line may also be translated, "yet the poor woman did not speak of her crime."

10 "An affront to one's *jāti,*" a word that can mean family, caste, or ethnic group.

11 He was decapitated, though the gods, with Shiva's permission, later provided him with the head of a goat.

12 Tulsi puns on the word *jaṛa,* which means dense and insentient (as is a mountain) as well as dull or stupid.

13 This tree (*bela*) is sacred to Shiva and its leaves are offered to him.

14 This epithet of the goddess may literally be translated as "without leaves" (*a-parṇa*).

15 "Dispassionate," *birāgā;* commentators interpret this to mean that he left his "home" on Mount Kailash and became a wandering ascetic.

16 This half line has occasioned much discussion, with commentators largely divided on whether Shiva feels that it is improper for him, as a reconfirmed ascetic, to marry again, or whether, speaking from the devotional stance of servility, he thinks it wrong for Ram to entreat him to do so (see *Mānaspīyūṣ* 2.272–273).

17 Literally, "place it on my head."

18 Before this line, the *Mānaspīyūṣ* inserts a *caupāī* that is said to have been written in the margin of a 1607 C.E. manuscript: "The seers went at once to where Gauri was and, seeing her condition, were astonished." However, the transition between Shiva's order and the sages' arrival at the place of Parvati's austerity, though abrupt, is not unusual in the epic.

19 The references are to three puranic tales in which Narad, cosmic wanderer and busybody, gives advice that causes the seeming ruin of families by inducing royal heroes to renounce the world.

20 That is, Vishnu, who is already married to Shri (Lakshmi) and resides in a celestial paradise known as Vaikunth.
21 One clan of demons is known as *dānava* and *danuja,* after their mother, Danu, one of the wives of the divine sage Kashyap.
22 Kama (who is also called Mara, "he who smites") is a Cupid-like deity who shoots flower arrows at victims' hearts. His helpers include the spring season and other natural phenomena that evoke an amorous mood.
23 Literally, "Who is the two-headed one...?" implying that only someone with a head to spare would dare challenge the aroused love god.
24 Each half line contains a pair of natural objects whose words, in Sanskrit/Hindi, are gendered, respectively, masculine and feminine (e.g., "vine" and "river" are feminine, "tree" and "ocean" masculine, etc.).
25 The allusion is to a type of goose (*koka,* also called *cakvā*) thought to mate only by day and to suffer separation by night. Commentators point out, however, that *koka* also names the author of the Sanskrit erotic treatise *Kokaśāstra.*
26 In the full *caupāī,* Tulsidas playfully pairs *jogī* (yogi) with *biyogī,* a word that can mean both one who is "without yoga" and one who is suffering in separation from a lover.
27 Literally, "for the whole of two *daṇḍas,*" the latter being a unit of twenty-four minutes.
28 "Conjunction," *nakhata;* an astrological term referring to the period of a lunar or planetary transit of a region of the sky.
29 "Letter," *patrī;* this refers to the *lagan patrī* or formal wedding announcement and invitation card sent out by the bride's family.
30 "Waterpots," *kalasa;* auspicious vessels of metal or clay filled with water, preferably from a sacred source, that are used in many Hindu rituals.
31 One of Shiva's accoutrements is a small, hourglass-shaped drum, also carried by street performers and some Shaiva ascetics. When shaken, its two heads are sounded by bead clappers.
32 "Jest," *bingya;* this is defined as joking, irony, or sarcasm. Shiva's remark on Vishnu's propensity for "joking" or "teasing" speech (*bingya bacana*) is understood by many commentators as implying that the god's words are allusive or enigmatic in their import, actually praising Shiva while appearing to disparage him.

33 "Reception party," *agavānī;* in the context of a wedding, this refers to a male contingent from the bride's household that goes out to greet the groom's entourage.

34 Although this word literally means a female practitioner of yoga, it also refers to a class of wild, tantric demigoddesses believed to abduct and devour children and to feast on the entrails of slain warriors.

35 "Auspicious tray," *āratī;* connoting a song of praise and supplication, it also refers to the metal plate or tray used in accompanying worship, on which a small oil lamp, flowers, vermillion, rice grains, and other auspicious items are arranged. At a wedding, the mother of the bride waves this tray in a circular motion while singing an auspicious song (*maṅgal*), before the approaching bridegroom at the threshold of the home.

36 "Ribald songs," *gārī̃;* literally, "abuse," or "insult," in the context of a wedding, this refers to teasing songs, often containing sexual innuendos mocking the men of the groom's party, traditionally sung by women of the bride's household.

37 "Sipped water," *acavāṃi;* a sip of water to rinse the mouth, signaling the end of a meal. *Pān* is a betel leaf containing areca nut and savory spices, chewed to cleanse the palate and aid digestion.

38 Elephant-headed Ganesh, invoked at the commencement of rituals, is considered to be the son of Parvati and Shiva.

39 Considered highly purifying, *kuśa* grass is used in Vedic rituals such as *pāṇigrahaṇa* (taking of the hand), in which a father places his daughter's hand in that of her bridegroom, signaling a climactic moment in the marriage rite.

40 "Subservient," *parādhīna;* literally "dependent on another." Such laments are traditional—sometimes heartfelt, sometimes merely formulaic—at the time of a new bride's departure from her maternal home.

41 "Supplicants," *jācaka,* may refer to beggars, to whom a royal bridegroom tosses handfuls of coins, or to the Brahmans who officiated at the wedding, to whom he presents lavish stipends.

42 The peacock-riding god Kartikeya, or Skanda.

Causes of Ram's Incarnation

1 "Lord of the world," *viśvanātha,* is both an epithet of Shiva and the name of his most venerated embodiment and temple in Varanasi.

2 "Play," *līlā;* this key concept-word in Vaishnava theology refers to the Lord's spontaneous and playful cosmic activity, undetermined by karma.

3 "Threefold breeze," *tribidha samīra;* a stock trope for a refreshing breeze, understood to possess the qualities of gentleness, coolness, and fragrance.

4 "Entitled," *adhikārī;* one who possesses entitlement, qualification, or authority for something. This key term in Sanskritic ideology, often used to exclude individuals from traditional knowledge based on their birth, is used twice by Parvati: first, to invoke (and seemingly endorse) the Brahmanical misogyny that denies women access to Vedic lore, and in the following *caupāī,* to assert, in contradiction, that she does possess the necessary qualification as one who is "desperate and deserving" (*ārata adhikārī*).

5 Clearly, like most of Tulsidas's intended audience, Parvati already knows the broad outlines of the story (including Ram's physical death, which Tulsidas will refrain from recounting), and in the verses that follow she also anticipates the "epilogue" that constitutes much of the seventh book of the *Mānas.*

6 An alternate reading, preferred by some commentators, takes "supreme bliss" (*paramānanda*) as an epithet of Shiva; "and he—supreme bliss—found infinite joy."

7 This is a common trope in Vedantic philosophy for illusion-bound ignorance, as in the sixth of the Sanskrit verses that open this book.

8 "Powers," *siddhi;* occult attainments, traditionally eight in number, such as the ability to make one's body immense or tiny, to fly, etc.

9 This very popular *caupāī* is sometimes recited as a refrain at the end of each stanza in ritual performances of the text.

10 The relationship, according to most commentators, is the reverse of what the reader might suppose: i.e., the perception of objects depends on the senses, which in turn depend on their presiding deities (e.g., Surya, the sun, presides over sight), and the latter ultimately depend on the awareness of embodied souls.

11 These lines paraphrase *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 3.17–19.

12 The marks made by cows' feet in the dirt roads of rural India, resulting in tiny puddles during the rains, form a metaphorical counterpoint, in much bhakti poetry, to the vastness of the ocean of transmigratory existence the soul must cross.

13 "Unthinkable doubt," *asambhāvanā;* literally, "impossibility,"

"improbability." Here, it implies the discrepancy that Parvati perceived between the transcendent Ram and the embodied prince of Avadh.

14 Literally, "the heat of the sun during Sharad"; this month, which follows the monsoon rains, sees a return of intense sunlight before the onset of the cooler winter season. Moonbeams are conventionally said to be cool.

15 Compare to 1.30.4, which states that Shiva himself previously told the story to the crow Bhushundi.

16 Kanakakashipu (aka Hiranyakashyapa) and Hiranyaksha (aka Hatakalochana)—"golden tortoise" and "golden eyes"—two demonic kings famed in the *purāṇas.*

17 See "Prologue," n. 68.

18 "Cosmic cycle," *kalapa;* a full cycle of four yugas, or world-eras. Tulsidas accepts the puranic cosmology of innumerable such cycles, in each of which occurs an advent of the Ram avatar.

19 Here the narrative voice apparently shifts back to Yajnavalkya, who will refer to Shiva (Shambhu) in the third person in the next *caupāī* and will address Bharadvaj ("listen to it, sage") at 1.124.2.

20 In most versions of this puranic story, Vishnu assumes the guise of Jalandhar and sleeps with Vrinda, the demon king's virtuous wife, dooming her husband. She then curses him to lose his own wife through trickery on the part of a future incarnation of Jalandhar.

21 In the past two stanzas, the speaker has changed from Yajnavalkya to Parvati, then to Shiva, then back to Yajnavalkya, and finally to Tulsidas—a typical reminder of the epic's multiple narrative "frames."

22 The allusion is to a curse pronounced by Daksha (Sati's father) in retaliation for Narad's having advised Daksha's sons to leave home. By its terms, Narad was condemned to perpetual wandering with no fixed abode. But (says the *Mānaspīyūṣ*), "Here we are informed that, when one remembers Hari with love, no curse can afflict one" (2.618).

23 Indra is always frightened by ascetics in deep meditation, for their austerities generate power that could permit the practitioner to usurp Indra's post as ruler of heaven. His usual strategy in such cases (as here) is to send Kama, accompanied by celestial courtesans, to attempt to distract the sage.

24 As an ascetic yogi, Shiva is famously the "enemy of Kama," and so

Narad's boasting implies that he has matched his achievement.

25 The reason for Shiva's warning—Vishnu's pledge to remove egoism from his devotees—will become clear shortly.

26 "World-enchantress" (*viśvamohinī*) was the name of the female form assumed by Vishnu in the myth of the churning of the cosmic ocean, in order to distract the demons when they were contending with their cousins, the gods, over the nectar of immortality.

27 The word used for this event is *svayaṃbara,* or "self-choice," a ritual of the warrior caste, in which a princess placed a garland around the neck of her chosen suitor among assembled princes. The term also refers to contests in which suitors vied to perform a difficult feat set by the bride's family (as in the case of Ram's winning of Sita).

28 Literally, "his eyes became cool," an idiom signifying relief from stress.

29 Besides being a common epithet of Vishnu, *hari* can mean "tawny colored" and is a synonym for "monkey."

30 Alternatively, this may be read, "a victory garland of lotuses in her hands."

31 Since traditional men's lower garments were simply lengths of cloth wrapped in various ways, they lacked pockets, and valuables were generally secured in their upper folds, which were cinched tight at the waist.

32 The reference is to various objects that arose from the churning of the cosmic ocean by the gods and their demonic cousins. These included poison, spirituous liquor, the goddess of fortune (Lakshmi), and the gem that Vishnu wears on his breast. All Narad's insults that follow refer, in one way or another, to vaunted attributes of Hari, and thus constitute a perverse litany of praise.

33 Literally, "you have sent a gift [of sweets] to a good house." When said sarcastically, this idiom signals an act of provocation that will earn rightful retribution.

34 That is, the handsome form of a human king that Vishnu took for the princess's bridegroom-choice.

35 Again, the interjection of the name of this sage reminds us that Shiva's narrative is in turn being retold by Yajnavalkya.

36 In Hindu legend, the primordial king and lawgiver, who appears at the beginning of each cosmic cycle. His wife's Sanskrit name is Shatarupa.

37 The sage Kapil, legendary founder of the metaphysical system known as Samkhya, is also considered an avatar of Vishnu.
38 This is generally understood to be *Oṃ namo bhagavate vāsudevāya,* "Om, salutation to Lord Vasudev"—the latter being an epithet of Vishnu.
39 The smooth surface of a conch shell with its several folds is conventionally invoked in Indian poetry to describe the fleshy neck that signaled health and an abundant diet in premodern times (note the description of the Lord's ample belly in 1.147).
40 This passage underscores Tulsi's conviction that Sita-Ram is the ultimate form of God, encompassing and transcending all deities, including Vishnu and Lakshmi.
41 "One who relishes dharma"; Shukra is priest of the gods and adviser to Indra.
42 Traditionally, the four divisions were soldiers on elephants, cavalry, warriors in chariots, and foot soldiers.
43 Vindhyachal (Vindhya) is the name of a range of hills that marks the traditional boundary between the Gangetic plain and the Deccan. "Fine deer" (literally, "pure deer") implies that the king slew only species that the scriptures deem fit for hunting.
44 Some commentators interpret the final phrase to mean, "the king challenged him saying, 'You will not escape!'"
45 "League," *jojana;* a unit of measure variously said to equal four, eight, or sixteen miles.
46 Since the line contains no conjunction, some commentators prefer "and" to "either/or else." Either way, the couplet expresses the inescapable nature of what past karma has ordained.
47 Commentators offer several interpretations for this half line. The gods may be troubled by perfect poverty because they are unable to offer their usual rewards (wealth, worldly attainments) to one who has embraced it. Alternatively, they may fear the spiritual power it yields, which could allow a human being to usurp their heavenly station. Or they may ponder whether, before such simplicity, their own sumptuous existence as cosmic overlords is of any worth.
48 Literally, "a heron-(like) meditator." In Indian animal lore, the heron is a false yogi: he stands in flooded fields on one leg, apparently meditating, but actually watching for small fish he can devour.
49 See "Prologue," n. 14.

50 Literally, "(under) a single (royal) umbrella."

51 This apparent aphorism is, literally, "Without medicine, fate has destroyed the disease."

52 Commentators state that the fraternal word signals an insult in this context.

53 Meru is the earth-anchoring cosmic mountain, hence, immovable. Yama is the god of death and retribution.

GLOSSARY

AVADH (*avadha;* unconquerable) the kingdom and city of Ayodhya

BHAVA (*bhava;* existence, being, rebirth) Shiva

BHAVANI (*bhavānī,* feminine form of *bhava*) Parvati, the great goddess, Shiva's consort

BHRIGU LORD (*bhṛgupati*) Parashuram

cakor the chukar partridge, which, according to legend, forever craves sight of the moon and feeds on its beams (and occasionally on fire); a poetic trope for fervent lovers and devotees

GAURI (*gaurī;* fair, light-complexioned) Parvati

GIRIJA (*girijā;* "mountain-born girl") Parvati

haṃsa mythical bird that lives in the Himalayas, feeds on pearls, and has the ability to separate milk from water; a literary trope for the enlightened soul, it is often depicted by Tulsidas as flying above or floating on Lake Manas; sometimes identified with the bar-headed goose that breeds in Central Asia and winters in India, crossing the Himalayas in its annual migrations

HARA (*hara*) Shiva

HARI (*hari;* lion- or tawny-colored) Vishnu/Ram

JANAKI (*jānakī;* "daughter of Janak") Sita

KALI (*kali*) The fourth and most degenerate age of the traditional Hindu time-cycle of four ages (*yugas*).

KAMA (*kāma;* love, desire, eros) the god of love, who is also called "bodiless" because, having been burned to ashes by Shiva, he lives invisibly in all created beings

KASHI (*kāśī;* "the effulgent") Varanasi, Banaras

kinnara a semidivine being with the head of a horse

KOSALA (*kosala*) realm of which Avadh is the capital

KUMBHAKARAN (*kumbhakarṇa;* "pot-ears") Ravan's gigantic elder brother, who sleeps for six months at a time

MADHAV (*mādhava;* "descendant of Madhu") Vishnu/Ram

MAHESH (*maheśa;* "the great lord") Shiva

MAINA (*mainā*) the wife of King Himalaya and mother of Parvati

makara a legendary sea creature that combines parts of one or more terrestrial animals with the tail of a fish

MARA (*māra;* "the one who strikes") epithet of Kama, the god of love and lust

MAYA (*māyā;* fabrication, semblance) the illusory power of the gods, often personified as a goddess

NIGHT-STALKERS (*nisācara*) earthly demons, or *rākṣasas,* who are most powerful and hunt their prey by night

pān a betel leaf containing areca nut and savory spices, chewed to cleanse the palate and aid digestion

PURARI (*purārī;* "foe of the [three] cities") Shiva

RAMCHANDRA (*rāmacandra;* "Ram, the moon") epithet of Ram, highlighting his beauty

RATI (*rati;* "passion") the wife of Kama, god of love.

RAVAN (*rāvaṇa;* "he who causes lamentation") the gods' nemesis and the antagonist of the Ramayana

RUDRA (*rudra;* "the howler") Shiva

SAMADHI (*samādhi*) a trance-like state of profound meditation

SHAMBHU (*śambhu;* pleaser) Shiva

SHANKAR (*śaṅkara;* auspicious, benevolent) Shiva

SHARADA (*śāradā;* autumnal) epithet of Sarasvati, goddess of speech, art, and learning and the wife of the creator-god Brahma

SHESH (*śeṣa;* "the remainder") the thousand-headed divine serpent; with his thousand tongues, also a literary trope for eloquence

SHRI (*śrī;* auspicious) epithet of goddess Lakshmi; sometimes used for Sita

siddha (*siddha;* "perfected one") an adept who has attained the goal of yoga or another spiritual discipline

TRIPURARI (*tripurārī,* sometimes abbreviated *purārī;* "foe of the three cities of demons") Shiva

UMA (*umā;* mother) Parvati

VAIKUNTH (*vaikuṇṭha;* relating to Vikuntha, i.e., Vishnu) Vishnu's heavenly world

VASUDEV (*vāsudeva;* descendant of Vasudeva, a deity) epithet of Vishnu

VIBHISHAN (*vibhīṣaṇa;* terrifying) Ravan's pious junior brother, who is a devotee of Vishnu/Ram

VISHVANATH (*viśvanātha;* "lord of the world") Shiva

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